

Data Warehouse Design for Rydex Investments Enhances CRM Capabilities and Performance Metrics

Industry

Financial Services

Client

Rydex Investments is an innovative financial services company that is dedicated to providing financial professionals and sophisticated investors with the necessary tools to manage portfolios in all market environments. Rydex was the first to offer leveraged index funds, inverse funds, and funds that price twice daily in real time. The firm offers knowledgeable investors a breadth of investment choices, including funds benchmarked to well-known indices, sector funds, and inverse funds designed to move opposite the prevailing market trends.

Background

Rydex was replacing its existing customer relationship management (CRM) system with an upgraded version of Pivotal. The new CRM setup would create a workspace for the Rydex sales force to manage all of its client-related sales and marketing data, such as customer/prospect information, sales forecasts, strategic campaigns and market opportunities.

Concurrently, Rydex was training its IT staff on the Cognos toolset, which the management team had selected as a front-end reporting interface for its SQL Server database. The Cognos toolset (including DecisionStream and ReportNet) offers data gathering; Extraction, Translation, Load (ETL); data transformation; and customizable reporting capabilities.

Rydex employs a customized version of PowerAgent to manage its trading data. One of their primary objectives was to integrate the CRM system with the Trading application so they could produce more complete reports on their customers and provide improved data mining.

Project Detail

Rydex sought to link sales data with trading data via a sophisticated data warehouse. This would allow Rydex to analyze and measure its sales process by comparing marketing efforts to specific trading activity across accounts. Performance indicators and metrics would be accessible through the CRM system. The ETL process for the data warehouse is the mechanism for merging the sales data and the trading data and for supplying the results to Pivotal and the data warehouse.

After experiencing various design problems with its first-generation data warehouse, Rydex contacted RDA to verify that the Pivotal system met Rydex's customization requirements for the next version. (RDA had previously assisted Rydex with production server configuration.)

At Rydex's request, RDA also assisted with the data migration effort and worked with the contractors who were implementing Pivotal for Rydex.

This included contributing to the data cleanup process. Rydex developed a custom application in Visual C# to facilitate this and RDA supported Rydex with the definition of functional requirements and the creation of data structures and stored procedures.

RDA played a significant role in developing the architecture for the sales force automation project. In addition, the RDA team:

- Provided consulting on the recommended Mass Storage Array to be used by SQL Server
- Provided guidance on the use and configuration of SQL Server 64 bit on Windows 2003
- Delivered bulk load processing standards and tuning advice on a .5 terabyte solution
- Delivered the design and development of custom managed file groups and partitioned views
- Delivered consultative code reviews to identify and recommend corrections to stored procedure performance and deadlock problems

Challenges

Many of the firms, branches, and contacts in both the Pivotal and PowerAgent systems were duplicated and needed to be brought together into a single entry. For example, a contact could have two entries in PowerAgent with just slight differences in the name or address spelling.

Results

The resulting business system includes the following features:

- Robust contact management
- Opportunity forecasting capabilities

The system houses more than 25,000 firms, 35,200 branch offices and 153,000 individual financial professional contacts. It brings together spheres of Transfer Agency sales data, contact information, business intelligence and third-party sales and research information from three major systems across the firm. It has also been designed to expand and grow with the firm.

Benefits

Rydex is now able to explore deeper, more profitable and complete relationships with all customers. This valuable internal and external communication tool provides a common view of the financial professionals, institutions and organizations with whom they conduct business.

In addition to supporting the architectural design and data modeling for the data warehouse, RDA's team leader served as an unofficial mentor for Rydex's project manager.

Technically Speaking

Since Rydex was reorganizing its highly independent product divisions under a centralized management structure, the technology solution needed to enable Rydex's IT department to seamlessly accommodate the new business design.

RDA drew from its strong portfolio of work for similar data warehouse projects to design a framework that would meet Rydex's current needs and support potential additional product development and expanded data networking capabilities. The SQL Server database, used for Rydex's entire enterprise, resides on a robust, 64-bit Windows 2003 platform.

An off the shelf product called Trillium was used to help with identifying possible records to merge and also to match Pivotal with PowerAgent entries. Trillium is a command line program that is run by the ETL process. The custom application provides a user interface for the Data Management group to review and merge (or unmerge) these records. Much of the processing in the custom application is performed using stored procedures that were designed by RDA.