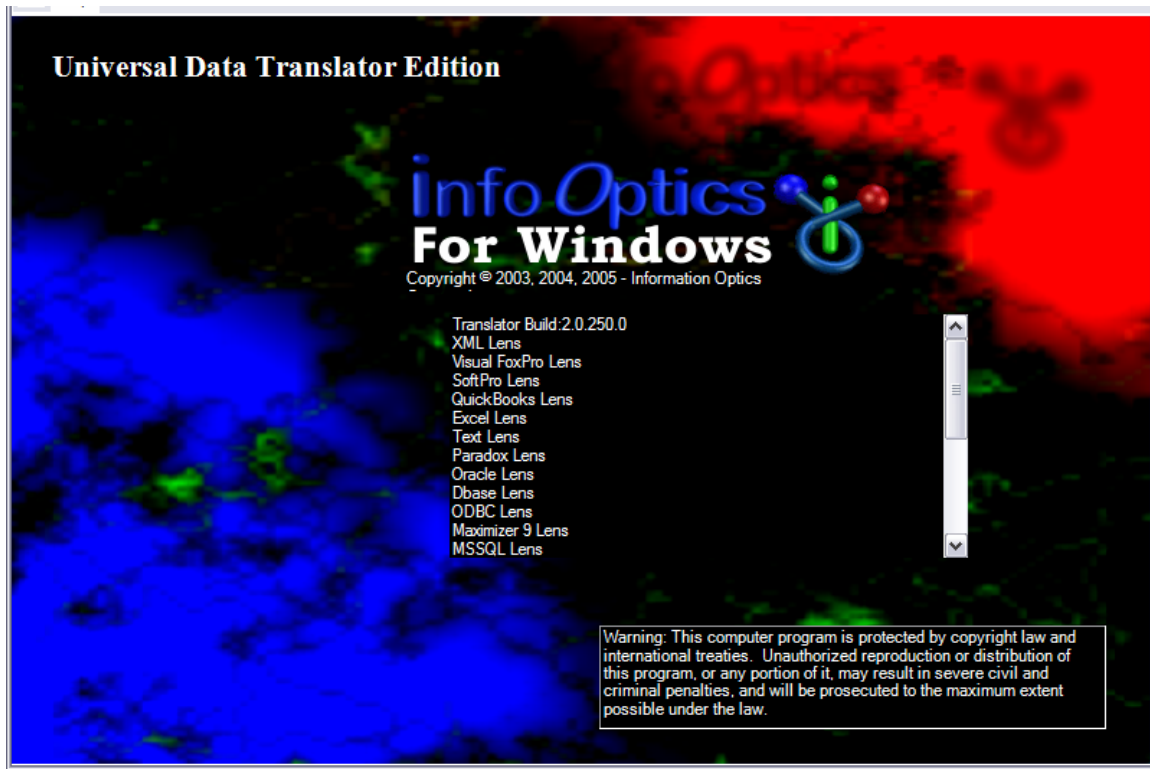




Information Optics Corporation

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Case Study Bi-Directional Synchronization Between ACT 2006 and DB2 (AS-400)



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A client of ours specializes in the creation and import of high quality, pre-prepared desserts and other high end food products for distribution to restaurants, saving the chefs large amounts of time without sacrificing taste and presentation. Since the companies inception in the 1960's, they have grown to be a leader in their industry. Due to the amount of growth that the company has experienced, the company quickly realized that their business was about helping the efficiency of other businesses, in this case restaurants and hotels. What they needed however, was a way to increase the efficiency of their own operation.

Our clients Director of Information Technology approached us as many do, he expressed frustration regarding the current process that they were using to get orders into their order entry system which was a DB2 database hosted on an AS-400 micro computer. At the time the company had fifty sales representatives that were spread out all over the United States. Each sales person uses ACT 2006 Contact Relationship Manager (CRM) to store information regarding their customers, prospects, and orders that they have placed for their customers. In order to ensure that all of the data they were collecting from day to day was up to date at their headquarters, each sales rep would synchronize their ACT database with the Master ACT database that is hosted at the client's main office. Previous to our automation plan being deployed, the information that was synchronized into the Master ACT database would have to be manually taken from ACT and entered into the Order Entry System. Subsequently, any new information that was generated from the Order Entry System needed to be relayed back out to the sales people so that they had all of the most up to date information regarding their customers and orders.

Our engineering department went to work fast, developing a data integration plan that would meet the customer's expectations. Within the short term, we had a model of exactly how we could accomplish the task at hand, an estimate of what the deployment would cost "soup to nuts", and a timeline on approximately how long it would take. Our contacts were pleased when they saw exactly what we were proposing, and wanted to begin immediately.

Due to the sheer complexity involved in this implementation, we sent our head engineer to the client's corporate headquarters to personally implement the data integration plan. The first major hurdle that we encountered while developing and refining the automation plan, was how to get information from a non-Windows based architecture (AS-400) to a Windows 2000 server architecture and vice versa.

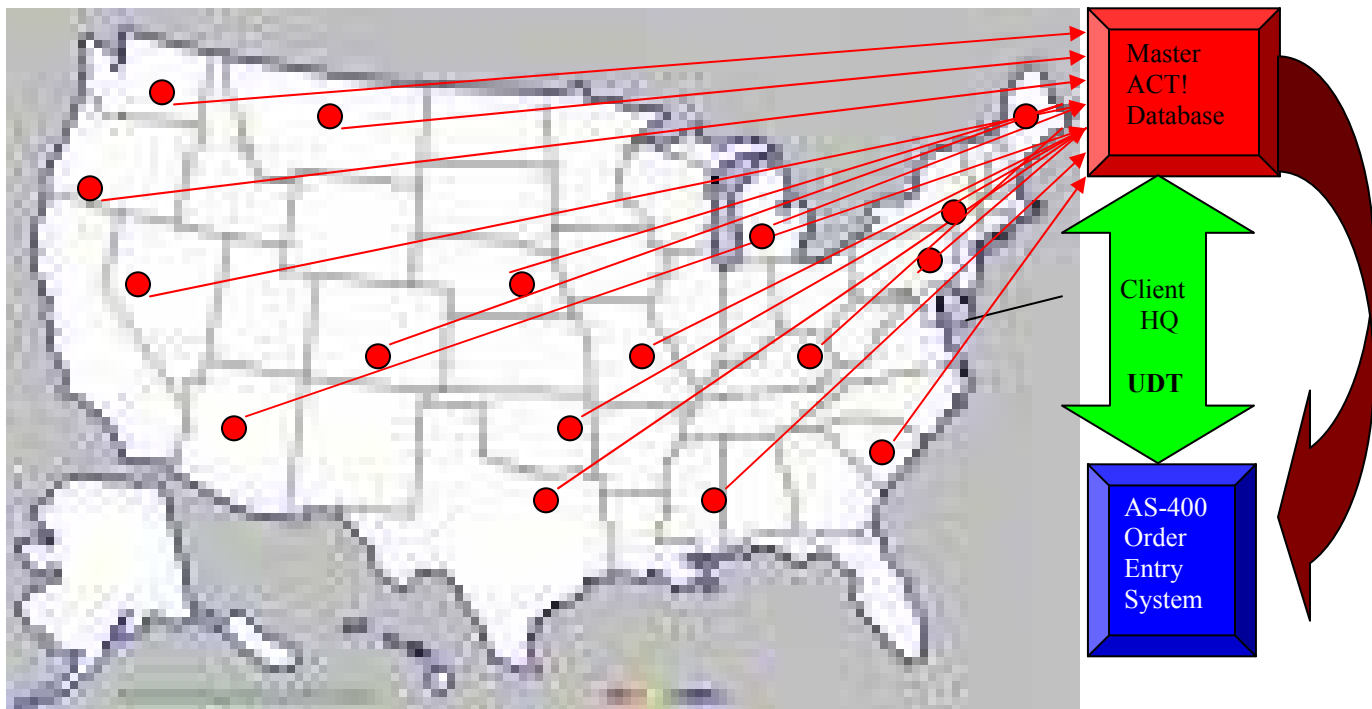
Secondly, we needed to have the ability to create a scheduled synchronization between these two completely disparate, relational data sources without jeopardizing the integrity of the relationship between the customers and their individual orders and transactional information. Even the most experienced database administrators would look at this task as virtually impossible.

With the help of our proprietary software InfoOptics the Universal Data Translator (UDT) we made a seemingly impossible task possible. The robust architecture of InfoOptics UDT allowed us to connect to the AS-400 microcomputer's DB2 order entry system by using an ODBC connection. Hurdle one was now cleared. The reason that the Universal Data Translator stands out amongst other programs of its kind, is its ability to synchronize relational data between disparate data sources, so hurdle number two was now also cleared and all that was left to do was put the plan into effect.

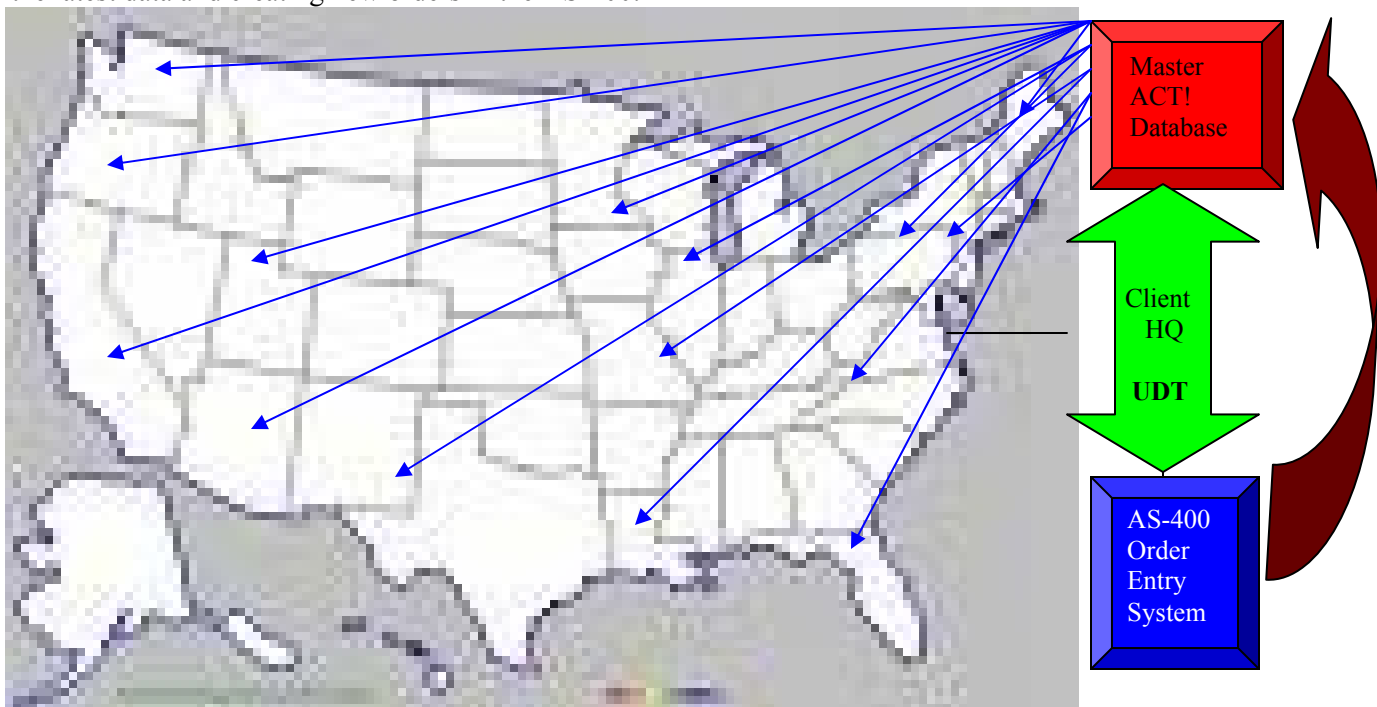
Our engineer spent two days working at the customers headquarters with their existing IT staff. They worked hand in hand to refine the automation plan so that it would perform to their exact requirements. The following, outlines the way in which our automation plan solved this clients problem:

- We developed a Translation Definition File (.TDF) that senses when new and updated order information is present in the Master ACT database and then translates the appropriate information into the AS-400 Order Entry System.
- Now, as these new orders are being processed, fulfilled, and shipped, new information is being generated inside of the AS-400.
- To ensure that the sales force was updated with all of the latest information regarding their customers and specifically the orders that they had placed, we developed a second .TDF file that senses when order information such as product and shipping status is updated and in turn translates this new information back into the Master ACT database.
- The result, now every time that a sales person synchronizes their ACT database with the Master ACT database, not only was the latest information being sent and new orders being processed but the updated order information was being relayed to the sales persons ACT database.

The following diagram is meant to show how the automation process flows:



The sales force synchronizes their ACT database with the Master ACT database at HQ. At this point InfoOptics UDT takes over. The UDT runs every hour, capturing all of the latest data and creating new orders in the AS-400.



As the sales are rolling into the system, orders are being fulfilled and new information is being generated within the AS-400 Order Entry System. InfoOptics senses every update and translates product, shipping and transactional information back into the opportunities tables inside of the Master ACT database. Now, as the sales force is synchronizing their ACT databases with the Master, they are receiving the latest updates pertaining to the orders that they have placed for their customers.

The benefit is clear; efficiency plays a huge factor in this case. Imagine how many man hours are saved just because of this initiative alone. Think about how these processes may have been getting done before this tailor made solution was implemented. In the end, we were able to provide this client with a solution that solved their data management issues. Our automation plan provided this customer with solutions to several key business issues such as:

- An increase in workplace efficiency as the result of a decrease in the amount of duplicate data entry required
- Reduced risk of human error
- A more productive sales force due to the fact that now the sales team has the information they need, when they need it
- A boost in employee morale now that some of the more “arduous” daily tasks are automated

At Information Optics Corporation, we are confident that our expertise along with our robust software suite puts us in the position to help virtually any business in the same ways documented here. It is our goal to help companies reach their full potential without putting extra strain on an organizations ‘human resources’ and to start re-defining common business terms such as workplace efficiency, productivity, and best practices.

If you think that your organization could benefit from similar initiatives to those described here, don’t hesitate to contact a member of our sales team at (609) 607-0778 x1 or e-mail us at sales@infooptics.com. For more information about IOC products and services, please visit www.infooptics.com.