

STATE OF GENEVA LEVERAGES SMARTDB ACROSS MULTIPLE PHASES OF MAJOR FINANCIAL SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION.

“The cost savings that these new data integration techniques enable made our investment in SmartDB pay for itself very quickly, and we will continue to leverage the technology across multiple projects well into the future.”

Moreno Sella, Chief Financial Officer,
State of Geneva
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THE STATE OF GENEVA

The Swiss "Canton" of Geneva (equivalent to a US State) serves as the host to many leading international organizations, including the United Nations and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as hundreds of multinational companies. As the State of Geneva (the administrative body of the Canton) strives to fulfill its role as a leading center of technology, politics and global commerce, its IT department is constantly searching for industry-leading solutions to leverage existing technology investments and implement more streamlined systems to support its goals and staff. In 1999 the state of Geneva began a multi-million effort to upgrade its internal financial applications and processes. Oracle E-Business Suite was selected as the new financial platform and the project was named CFI (*Comptabilité Financière Intégrée*). Beginning in 2003 and continuing until 2005 the financial systems of eleven departments were migrated to the new CFI platform.

L3IT AND SMARTDB

Light3 Information Technology SA (L3IT) is a specialist consulting firm with extensive financial and technical experience working with IT system implementations at large public sector and private European organizations. Early on in the project L3IT identified that the SmartDB Workbench and Adapters would be critical to the success of this project. Several proofs of concept were performed that clearly showed how SmartDB's tools enhanced the productivity of technical project resources. In one data loading scenario using SmartDB, L3IT was able to achieve in less than two days what earlier took more than 3 months to do.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The challenge facing the State of Geneva involved a planned migration and consolidation of its eleven departments that were all running on separate systems, onto a single, centralized Oracle E-Business Suite platform. From an organizational and IT perspective, it would be impossible to have all eleven departments undergo the migration simultaneously as this would be too disruptive and risky.

One of the complexities that the IT department ran into early on was that all eleven departments had unique ways for capturing and storing data, resulting in eleven different data sources and inconsistent data quality. The need for a data conversion and interface tool that could improve data quality and easily handle multiple data sources and targets while effectively integrating with Oracle was obvious. After evaluating several available tools, the project steering committee under advisory of L3IT decided on SmartDB Workbench and SmartDB Adapters for Oracle E-Business Suite. As the project evolved the CFI project team relied on SmartDB for much more than initial data conversion.

PROJECT ENVIRONMENT

- Operating Platform: HP 8400 Server, HP-UX 11i, clustered
- Oracle E-Business Suite 11i (11.5.8)
- Modules: GL, AP, AR, OM, FA, I-Proc, PO, Cash Management, PAC (Project Accounting Costs), I-Store, XTR, an additional Java custom modules for petty cash management.
- Oracle Database 9i (9.2)
- SmartDB Workbench 10.0, Adapters for GL, AP, AR, PO, Cash Management

(I) DATA LOADING

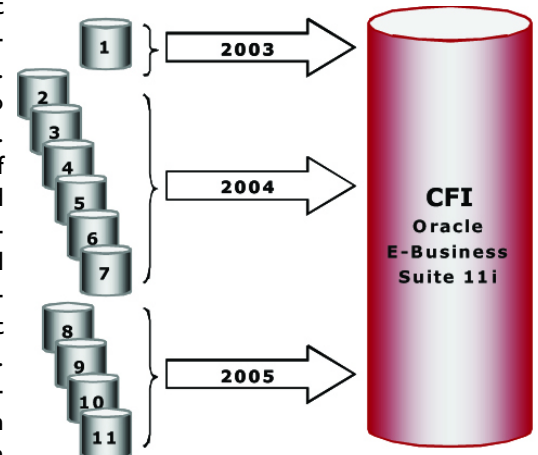
The first application of SmartDB was for the classical loading of reference data (e.g. suppliers, clients, chart-of-accounts) and transactional data (e.g. invoices, GL journal entries). To effectively map all the setup information, translation tables with mappings between all eleven legacy systems and the new Oracle system were created and referenced during the data migration. By using SmartDB pre-built Adapters and the interactive testing features of the SmartDB Workbench, multiple iterations of sample loads were possible in a very short period of time without having to physically load the data, allowing for easier identification and correction of errors in the source data.

“By combining the state of Geneva’s sophisticated financial processes with our technical expertise and SmartDB Workbench we were able to implement a phased rollout of the new Oracle System. In 25 years of managing financial system implementations, this was the first time I was not forced to take the ‘big bang’ approach to financial system implementation.”

Philippe Valaëys (L3IT),
CFI Assistant Project Director

(II) GL-GL PROCEDURES: PHASING THE PRODUCTION DEPLOYMENT

It was decided early in the CFI project that it would not be feasible to migrate all eleven legacy financial systems to Oracle in one “big-bang”. What that meant is that a phased approach to the rollout of the new system had to be taken. The challenge that this presented was one of keeping all the financial systems synchronized with the system of record. This required bi-directional synchronization of GL postings and over time, managing which system was the system of record, while synchronizing the rollout of the new system with financial periods. SmartDB was effectively employed as the interface solution between Oracle and the eleven legacy systems, keeping the GLs in synch throughout this 3 year rollout period. During 2003/4 the eleven legacy systems were still the overall financial system of record as most departments had not yet rolled out to the new Oracle platform. In 2005 the new CFI application became the system of record. Because of the ongoing data interfaces between the legacy systems and Oracle, the rollover was transparent to all departments except for when it was their turn to migrate, and the CFI project team was able to always present the state of Geneva with one virtual accounting system.



(III) DATA QUALITY

After being used for 15 years by the State of Geneva, the data in the eleven legacy systems was somewhat inconsistent. The conversion process presented the project team an opportunity to improve the overall quality of the data as it was migrated to Oracle. SmartDB proved to be an ideal tool for quality improvement processes such as the matching and merging of reference data and the elimination of duplicates. Data Quality improvement is ongoing, most notably during the reconciliation process between GL postings and transactions in the auxiliary accounting systems.

(IV) EXTERNAL INTERFACES

The State of Geneva also hosts certain financial disciplines for state-owned third parties such as hospitals and universities. The total value of financial transactions flowing through the system is counted in billions per year. There are hundreds of bank accounts and a large lock box that is now being managed by the CFI platform. An add-on system called PTPF (Payments Transactions Platform) acts as a single point of management for all State treasury management processes. Using SmartDB for data interfaces between the 3rd parties, banks (SWIFT MT940), PTPF and the CFI platform, a significant reduction in financial costs has been realized due to streamlined processes. This was an “afterthought” use of SmartDB technology, but according to the State treasurer, it alone has already achieved more than enough ROI for the entire project.

(V) BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

At the time of writing, the State of Geneva was in the early stages of implementing a Business Intelligence (BI) and Analytical Accounting solution on top of the new CFI platform. This requires the movement of large volumes of data between the operational financial applications and a BI repository, a task that SmartDB is also being considered for. Thanks to the quality and accuracy of data that the CFI platform delivers, the State’s financial decision makers will be able to obtain meaningful and timely analytics from their vast volumes of financial data.

THE FUTURE

Moreno Sella of the State of Geneva thinks that SmartDB is an excellent product for use over a long period of time and L3IT’s strong relationship with both the State and SmartDB will ensure that optimum use is made of any new functionality that will be released. Many of the uses of SmartDB is ongoing and therefore continues to help save the State money, allowing the CFI project to be self-supporting and providing a base for funding application of SmartDB technology on new IT projects.

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