

## MultiValue Integration to SQL Server Delivers Rapid ROI

*Health Care Products Distributor uses Kourier Integrator to Move UniData Data to SQL Server Data Warehouse*

Founded in 1953, National Distributing & Contracting (NDC), is the largest organization of independent medical, surgical and dental supply distributors in North America. Its members generate approximately \$6.5 billion in sales. Strategically located just south of Nashville, TN, and operating out of a 160,000 square foot state-of-the-art distribution facility, NDC distributes healthcare products from brand name manufacturers across the entire healthcare continuum. Additionally, NDC carries an extensive line of private label offerings. "Our vision is to provide access to products and services that will keep the local and regional independent medical products distributor competitive with the large, national companies," said Gregory Laird, vice president of information technology at NDC.

### Access to Information

Not surprisingly, the effective use of information technology plays a key role in keeping the playing field level. For its ERP system, NDC uses Prelude from Activant, a distribution package based on the UniData MultiValue database from IBM. "Virtually everything we order, stock, invoice or collect is handled through that system," Laird said. The company stocks approximately 15,000 items in its warehouse and markets another 75,000 for its vendor partners that are shipped directly.

While the Prelude application is very powerful, Laird noted, it was difficult to generate the necessary reports. "To get a custom report required a call to the software company," he said. NDC wanted to be able to more efficiently analyze and share the product history, pricing, sales history, customer information, the accounting information and e-commerce information stored in the database. "Using an ODBC tool seemed like it would be simple, but because of the MultiValue nature of the UniData database, it was a challenge and a lot of work to take MultiValue fields and breaking them out into sub-tables or child-tables," Laird said. "ODBC is oriented towards relational databases and if you try to perform a complex query, the performance evaporates." About 18 months ago, NDC decided that it had to find a technology that would extract the data from Prelude and load it into a data warehouse.

### MultiValue to SQL Server Integration

Since NDC used Microsoft SQL Server as the platform for its Web-based e-commerce site, Laird's team searched the Internet for a solution that would integrate UniData and SQL Server data. They discovered Kourier Integrator from Kore Technologies. Kore Technologies offers a comprehensive range of professional services and develops applications for the IBM U2 and Microsoft SQL Server databases, including its Kourier Integrator, SQL Accelerator, and a suite of .NET e-commerce solutions.

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Kourier Integrator allows companies to extract data from the IBM U2 databases and exchange it with other data sources. SQL Accelerator automatically moves data extracted from an IBM U2 database and loads it into a SQL Server database. "It was almost too good to be true," Laird said. "It did exactly what we wanted to do—get data out of the UniData database and into a SQL Server database. It was a great fit." After some remote preparation the installation was well underway within three days and complete within two weeks. "They [Kore Technologies] also helped us to better understand UniData as well," Laird said. "Part of our learning curve was figuring out how a MultiValue database works."

### Key Features

Net Change Tracking is a key feature of Kourier Integrator. It allows NDC to move only changed data to their 19 gigabyte SQL Server database rather than always running a full refresh. "We can take our open order information and update the changes every 10 minutes to our new Web site," Laird said. "Our customers have nearly real time access for open order and inventory status."

The more frequent updates have not had an impact on performance.

Moreover, Kourier Integrator has a tool that instantly understands how to transform MultiValue fields into appropriate relational tables. "It really is simple to use," Laird said. "We started with 20 tables we wanted to pull and now we have 50 or 60. It is simple to change." NDC also uses Kourier Integrator to generate Excel reports to test and preview data on Prelude.

### The Benefits

With Kourier Integrator in place, NDC completed six integration projects last year. It installed a Web-based business intelligence reporting tool. It retooled its rebate accounting system. It created a new sales incentive system. And it is launching a new application to track the chain of custody of drugs using Kourier Integrator. "I don't think we could have done half of them without Kourier," Laird said.

This year, NDC will launch its newly-developed e-commerce system. "We will drive it with data coming out of our Prelude system through Kourier," Laird said.

In the final analysis, Laird said, Prelude and UniData are very functional. "But it is so much easier to get data out of a relational database. It is much more accessible. It is night and day between what we could do and what we can do now." With a payback in less than a year, Laird said, Kourier Integrator has been one of the best technology purchases the company has made.

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