Rocket

Rocket Data Virtualization in Insurance
Empower independent agents with real-time information for enhanced customer engagement

About Rocket Data Virtualization

Data virtualization (DV) is a method of data management that allows an application to access and manipulate data without needing to understand its format or location. The various data sources are transformed into readily consumable formats that can be accessed in real time without the need for lengthy Extract-Transform-Load (ETL) operations.

Rocket Data Virtualization (RDV) is the only DV solution that resides and operates on the mainframe, enabling real-time data access from any application. Organizations have instant access to information to make better-informed business decisions at much less cost, and give high-priority projects—cloud, mobile, real-time analytics—a single logical data source.

The Problem

A mid-sized insurer offers life insurance and annuities through a network of independent agents.   It's a highly competitive business with a complex, data-intensive sales process. The insurer wants to enable agents to sell products more easily using an agent portal that runs on web- and mobile-enabled devices. The company has three business goals:

- Increase revenues by enabling independent agents to deliver faster quotes that leverage real-time information
- Provide real-time access to historical insurance data so agents can make timely, accurate proposals regardless of location
- Attract and keep the best independent agents—particularly recent graduates who are accustomed to web and mobile technologies that enable anytime, anywhere interaction

To provide timely quotes and advice, agents need real-time insights into customer and actuarial risk data that resides in operational databases on the mainframe. This includes a proprietary database of historical customer information collected since the early 1930s. The insurer uses a third-party mainframe data analytics package for actuarial analysis, which stores the results in complex tables on the mainframe.

With Rocket Data Virtualization, the insurer can afford to access, combine, and use all of its data—even hard-to-access mainframe data— to create a differentiated and productive agent portal.

As part of its modernization strategy, the insurer has invested in a commercial cloud-based platform for rapid development and continuous updating of its portal. The challenge is to bridge these two worlds without disrupting or re-architecting either of them. However:

- The data resides on a mainframe, and is hard for business users and modern analytics tools to access.
- Moving the data to a data warehouse using ETL is too slow, complex, and impractical for gaining real-time insights into the latest information.

The Solution

The only way to combine the diverse data sources effectively is through data virtualization. With Rocket® Data Virtualization (RDV), the insurer can locate, join, and normalize its mainframe and non-mainframe data—making it easy to combine with other enterprise data and access by standard methods such as SQL, JSON, or RESTful APIs. What's more, RDV can expose the data accessed by transactions as data services, making sophisticated web-based analytics interfaces possible. Specifically, RDV lets the insurer:

▸ **Work with nearly any application or data source:** Once virtualized, mainframe data can be used by any application, whether an analytics platform like Spark, a Bluemix hybrid cloud, an IBM MobileFirst mobile application, or transactional web applications. Creating, updating, or expanding applications is easy once the data is virtualized. Programmers don't need to know how any virtualized data source is formatted, what system it's running on, or where it's located. To Java programmers, mainframe data is indistinguishable from data in an Oracle database, Microsoft SQL Server database, or in Hadoop running on Cloudera. If they prefer SQL, programmers can access any and all of the virtualized data, and easily join an SQL Server table with a VSAM record.

▸ **Enable new channels for customer engagement:** Insurance customers have a variety of options for property and life insurance products. To effectively compete in a digital age, insurers must provide an engaging online experience. RDV makes it simpler to extend valuable customer and policy data to new enhanced online experiences that reinforce customer loyalty and provide options for incremental sales. RDV gives independent agents meeting with customers immediate access to critical customer data on the mainframe. Armed with real-time information, representatives can make better policy decisions and increase customer satisfaction.

▸ **Simplify information access for faster time to value:** The RDV development environment simplifies data discovery, mapping, and the creation of virtual tables, while standards-based connectivity ensures secure, reliable integration from any platform or data source.

▸ **Save money and make the CIO happy at the same time:** By using a specialty engine processor that doesn't eat up mainframe CPU cycles, RDV can process huge workloads at much lower cost than traditional integration methods. The insurer can avoid expensive mainframe upgrades that may derail a project, and if needed, can easily scale up processing by adding much less expensive specialty processing engines.

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