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A Guide to Evaluating Data Integration Options

The 5 critical capabilities you need

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Introduction

Chief information officers, line of business managers, and other corporate executives know that their database assets can be key contributors to business success.

To gain a competitive edge, organizations need to access and integrate those databases in the most flexible, modern way possible. But identifying the best data integration approach is tough when your organization uses Unisys ClearPath MCP server and its DMSII database. That's because traditional business intelligence tools support only relational databases, and the DMSII database is non-relational. These guidelines can help.
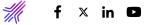
Rocket® Databridge* at a glance

Integration:
Combine information from several external sources.

Analysis:
Perform trend analyses.

Reporting:
Generate a wide variety of reports for improved decision support.

Comparing data-integration capabilities

This chart can help you sort through the various technologies available. It lists the top five capabilities needed for effective business intelligence and shows whether they are delivered by the most commonly used solutions. Each capability is described below:

Capability	ODBC Interface	Mainframe- Query Program	Data Extraction	Rocket Databridge
			Option	
MIPS Reduction				✓
Real-Time Data	✓	✓		✓
Flexible Format	✓	✓	✓	✓
No Mainframe Coding Skills Needed	✓			✓
Data Replication with Changed-Data Capture				✓

MIPS reduction

Mainframe Instructions Per Second refers to cycles used on the host by a given activity. In metered environments, MIPS equate directly to expenses, so reducing MIPS is an obvious goal. In nonmetered environments, MIPS still need to be reduced because they place demands on resources that could be running other programs. One way to reduce MIPS usage is to offload DMSII queries to a secondary database. Another way is to replicate changed data only.

Real-time data

Outdated data can result in bad decisions. But gathering real-time information is challenging in DMSII environments due to the costs of querying live data. Don't trade accuracy for economy. Look for a solution that replicates changes to the secondary (cloned) database in near real time. Once data has been replicated, changing replicated data only uses a fraction of the MIPS — keeping expenses down.
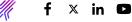
Flexible format

Formatted data can be easily viewed and manipulated. When data is sourced from a relational database, you gain that ability via SQL statements. But when the data is sourced directly from DMSII, you cannot. Instead, a direct view into DMSII data is achieved via a mainframe-coded program (e.g., ALGOL or COBOL) that can be changed only by someone with specific programming skills.

No mainframe coding skills needed

Some integration approaches require risky, labor-intensive code changes. But many mainframe coders are nearing retirement, so you won't be able to rely on their expertise for long. Best to opt for a solution that does not require mainframe coding skills.

Data replication with Changed-Data Capture (CDC)

CDC technology can ensure that business data stays up to date because it's supplied to relational databases in near real time. The right solution will synchronize changes by reading the audit file and replicating the same changes in a secondary database. In addition to ensuring data accuracy, this approach optimizes resource usage on the host.

A look at common solutions

The following solutions map to the At-a-Glance chart on the previous page:

- **ODBC interface.**
  Open Database Connectivity is a standard protocol for programs to access SQL database servers. The problem with ODBC is that it can take a long time to retrieve the data, unless you need only a small amount. Furthermore, it cannot replicate changed data only after the initial load. And with ODBC, the more data you access, the more MIPS expenses you accrue.

- **Mainframe-query program.**
  Homegrown applications running on the host substantially increase MIPS cycles. Operationally similar to SQL-query processes, they are done in DMSII and the resulting host-like format is not consumable for most business intelligence uses. Although certain utilities (e.g., LOADDUMP) can extract data from a DMSII database into a conventional file for better formatting, they typically require some mainframe programming expertise to achieve an acceptable degree of flexibility.

- **Data extraction**.
  Some organizations use a manual or automated process that extracts data from DMSII into a flat file that can then be loaded into a data store (such as a relational database) for business intelligence needs. Not only do the extracts consume cycles on the host, but the data is only as good as the last extract. While this method usually provides data in a usable format, creation of the extracts requires mainframe programming skills.

- **Rocket Databridge.**
  Rocket Databridge makes business information readily accessible, while simultaneously conserving host resources. It's the only solution that securely integrates DMSII and non-DMSII data into a secondary system. By replicating selected data from the host to a relational database (or multiple databases), organizations can combine information from several external sources, perform trend analysis, and generate a wide variety of reports for improved decision-making. What's more, Databridge is ideal for high-volume environments — simultaneously accommodating thousands of transactions and updates.

To summarize, only Rocket Databridge provides all of the capabilities in the At-a-Glance chart — in one economical solution. It's an advanced bridge to today's business intelligence tools.

About Rocket Software

Rocket Software is the global technology leader in modernization and partner of choice that empowers the world's leading businesses on their modernization journeys, spanning core systems to the cloud. Trusted by over 12,500 customers and 750 partners, and with more than 3,000 global employees, Rocket Software enables customers to maximize their data, applications, and infrastructure to deliver critical services that power our modern world. Rocket Software is a privately held U.S. corporation headquartered in the Boston area with centers of excellence strategically located around the world. Rocket Software is a portfolio company of Bain Capital Private Equity. Follow Rocket Software on LinkedIn and X.

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