

DMExpress Extreme Performance



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES relies on DMExpress to hit high-volume processing window and save \$1 million

Every day, hundreds of thousands of Tennesseans rely on the state's Department of Human Services (DHS) for a critical safety net of financial aid, unemployment assistance, and other social services. To qualify for these services applicants must meet eligibility requirements and complete various training opportunities provided by third-party agencies under state contract.

To track the performance of its contractors, DHS has, until recently, relied on a mainframe COBOL/DB2 data warehouse to track enrollments and pay vendors based on client participation rates. Each weekend, the state's IT team ran a refresh of the warehouse that took approximately 11 hours to complete. Every Monday morning, DHS case workers had access to updated information they could "drill down" through and summarize to better manage thousands of cases and contractor performance.

But with an annual cost exceeding \$1 million for that data warehousing system, the state recently migrated the application to an open-system server and an Oracle database to cut its costs and achieve longer-term cost-effectiveness. According to Sallie Cottingham, project manager – data warehouse rehosting, with DHS, that migration presented big problems with the weekend processing window. "What was taking 11 hours on the

mainframe suddenly ballooned to more than 30 hours on the server," she said. "The jobs we were using to cleanse data from transaction systems are sort-intensive. We have numerous COBOL routines to transform and summarize the sequential-file data before the Oracle database is updated. That transformation process was where

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— Sallie Cottingham, Project Manager
Data Warehouse Rehosting
Tennessee Department of Human Services

we were getting bogged down. We had successfully rehosted our COBOL programs using MicroFocus. However, in this new, distributed environment, we recognized that an additional, complementary technology to accelerate our processing would be important."



INDUSTRY

- Public Sector
- Administers numerous financial-assistance, unemployment programs, child care, and other social services
- 133 offices in all 95 counties in the state

CHALLENGE

- Migrate from mainframe to open-server environment to eliminate cost and complexity of legacy mainframe system
- Weekend processing window for large data warehouse ballooned from 11 hours to more than 30 hours
- Data availability was at risk for critical vendor-monitoring application

SOLUTION

- The extended capabilities of DMExpress slashed sorting and aggregation by 40-60 percent
- Implemented in just days and seamlessly integrated with MicroFocus COBOL

BUSINESS VALUE

- Enabled efficient and transparent migration with NO user visibility or impact
- Created operational savings of \$1 million

Since the state of Tennessee was a longtime user of Syncsort on the mainframe, it was an easy choice to apply DMExpress to the processing challenge. “Syncsort is a state standard and a proven performer,” said Ralph Duke, IT Director. “We first created a proof-of-concept to test a couple of the jobs that were particularly bottlenecked and we found a reduction of elapsed time of 50 percent, so we quickly knew this was the right way for us to go.”

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— Ralph Duke, IT Director
Tennessee Department of Human Services

DHS first implemented DMExpress as an MTO module to accelerate sorts and aggregations, creating a 30 percent improvement

in elapsed time. Next, with some minimal additional development, the team configured DMExpress to take advantage of even greater sort performance.

“When we deployed the enhanced configuration, our overall performance improved 40-60 percent,” said Cottingham. “We were under a time crunch, so implementing the MTO was our first choice because it was so straightforward and there was no learning curve – the only change that was needed was in a MicroFocus parameter. The enhanced configuration required a little more time, but it was well worth it, given the reduction in elapsed time that we achieved.”

Most importantly to Tennessee DHS, the migration has been transparent to the user. “This migration wasn’t going to work if that data wasn’t ready and available every Monday morning. Syncsort was the last piece of the puzzle that made it all happen,” said Duke.

“The re-hosting was a non-event to our users – which is just as it should be,” Cottingham said. One week, they were accessing a DB2 database on a mainframe and the next week they were accessing an Oracle database on an open server – all using the same OLAP tools. It all depended on our ability to get the data sorted, aggregated, and ready in the timeframe they’d come to expect: 6 a.m. Monday morning. And with Syncsort, we were able to achieve that. Now, our people can continue to be the best possible stewards of taxpayer funds by carefully monitoring contractor performance and ensuring accountability and accuracy. And with a collective operational cost savings of more than \$1 million, this project was a very important step for our IT department to take.”

According to Cottingham, Syncsort’s consulting and support were instrumental to the project’s success. “We’re mostly mainframe experts here and when you’re moving to an open-server environment, it can be a little uncomfortable,” she said. “But Syncsort’s consultants and support team were very helpful. They made the transition that much easier for us.

“They were certainly available to help with DMExpress support, of course. But they never told us ‘That’s not our job’ or ‘That’s not our product.’ They helped us see the big picture and pointed out other areas where we could improve. And they accelerated our deployment. Yes – we would have learned the features and nuances over time. But Syncsort’s people were able to come in and help us move forward with [extended capabilities] in just two days. They were just what we needed to move ahead in the right direction and stay on track.”

About Syncsort

Syncsort is a global software company that helps the world’s most successful organizations rethink the economics of data. Syncsort provides extreme data performance and rapid time to value through easy to use data integration and data protection solutions. With over 12,000 deployments, Syncsort has transformed decision making and delivered more profitable results to thousands of customers worldwide.

syncsort RETHINK THE ECONOMICS OF DATA*

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