



Success Story: Erie Insurance

Erie Insurance Cuts Elapsed Time by up to 99.8%, Dramatically Improving Query Performance Using SyncSort

Organizational Profile

- Founded in 1925
- Offers auto, home, commercial and life insurance

Business Need

- Speed up processing to improve the performance of a business intelligence application

Environment

- Dell GX150s
- Windows 2000

Benefits

- Reduced processing time by 99.8%, from 45 minutes to just 5 seconds
- Completed processing of a 10 GB job in 15¼ seconds
- Used to dedupe records, assign keys, sort, merge and summarize
- Easily handled indexing

"With SyncSort, I was able to add processing and reformatting capabilities, which I had no capacity to do before."

Nathan Hunsaker
Associate Life Actuary
Erie Insurance

The Challenge:

Founded in 1925 as a Pennsylvania auto insurer, Erie has grown to become a multi-line insurance company, offering auto, home, commercial and life insurance through a network of independent insurance agents. At Erie Family Life – the life insurance arm of the Group – Associate Life Actuary Nathan Hunsaker is charged with the task of creating customized applications to process the company's data for analysis. Complicating matters for Hunsaker is the fact that the company recently migrated his system from CMS to Windows.

The Solution:

Hunsaker is now using several Dell GX150s running Windows 2000 to build the applications. Since he was already familiar with SyncSort CMS, Hunsaker suggested to the IT department that the company utilize SyncSort for Windows. "They came to the same conclusion, and now we're starting to replace all of my mainframe applications. The Windows version was very easy to understand so there was absolutely no problem getting the same applications to exist," he stated. When information is requested within the life insurance division, the data are FTP'd to the local area network where Hunsaker is able to access it. "I tend to create extracts out of reporting files," he explains. The applications that he builds are always changing depending on user requirements. For example, he recently had to compare thousands of records and filter the duplicates, keeping only the last duplicate record. He built three SyncSort applications to perform the necessary processing. The first one used the copy function to assign a key to each record. The second SyncSort application sorted the records by the original key in ascending order and by the sequence number in descending order. This step also removed the sequence number, bringing the output back to the original format. The final application was a merge that eliminated the duplicates while keeping the original order of the records.

Some of the other projects that he works on include cleansing printable image reports, sorting and summarizing data, ad hoc requests, and the creation of datasets for external database and reporting applications. Not all of these jobs are data intensive, but when they have been, SyncSort has handled them easily. "One application consisted of approximately 52,000 records and was 5.3MB in size. SyncSort processed the data in 1.15 seconds. It ordered and filtered 200,000 records in less than 2 seconds," says Hunsaker. "I was very impressed with the results."

Along with "instant application development," Hunsaker is building a mortality study system. "For the project, I'm collecting an entire history of death benefits and lapses for all contracts at some point in time for 50 years in the future. This consists of several 100,000 records of various types. Just getting that right was

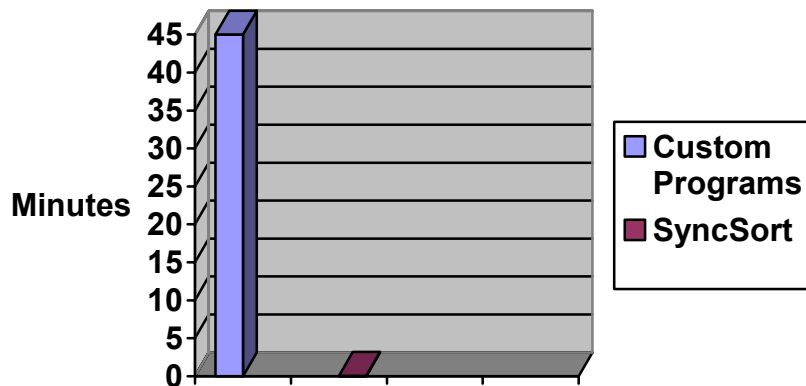
Success Story: Erie Insurance



a real trick because identifying the records that were wrong and separating and dealing with them was essentially impossible until SyncSort came across my desk. With SyncSort, I was able to add processing and reformatting capabilities, which I had no capacity to do before. I developed the study from the ground up so that it's all fixed-length records with 50 repeated fields at the end of the file. It's a little tough to index but SyncSort handles it with no difficulties." Hunsaker found that SyncSort completed the initial processing of 10 GB in 15 ¾ seconds. The project will be run on an annual basis and the data are expected to grow continually.

The Benefits:

Prior to integrating SyncSort, the application was taking 45 minutes to sort and process the data. Once SyncSort was implemented, Hunsaker was able to reduce the elapsed time by 99.8%, cutting it down to just 5 seconds. While touting the performance advantages that he gains using the software, Hunsaker also appreciates the help he receives from Syncsort's technical support team. "I've had a favorite vendor for many years. They have always answered my questions, whether it's their problem or not. I just promoted Syncsort to that level. They are exceptionally responsive and always provide a very thorough and useful solution. They either have the answer right away or they research the question and quickly send me examples."



SyncSort dramatically reduced processing time by 99.8%, from 45 minutes to just 5 seconds

About SyncSort

SyncSort is a high-performance application accelerator that improves the performance of multiple applications and reduces elapsed time for a broad range of applications. It speeds ETL transactions by up to 90% and facilitates data mining and click-stream processing. SyncSort merges, aggregates, cleanses, and converts data. Other features include filtering, pattern matching, and partitioning. SyncSort will save you time in operations like data warehousing, data mining, data marts, CRM, ERP, DSS, BI, Oracle Financials, and legacy migration. Using Visual SyncSort, SyncSort applications can be created through a Windows-like GUI. For more information or to arrange for a free trial, call Syncsort at (201)930-8200 or visit www.syncsort.com.