

Case Study: A global energy company

About IPL

Founded in 1979, IPL has a long history of successfully delivering excellent value consultancy and end-to-end solutions to both the public and private sectors.

IPL's consultancy is renowned for its quality and value. Our consultants are talented and independent-minded individuals with extensive industry experience. We consistently exceed our clients' expectations through a combination of imaginative thinking, managerial and technical expertise and many years of systems engineering experience.

IPL's track record in end-to-end solutions development is exceptional. Our proven development methodology allows us to cut through technical complexity, manage risk and completely focus on delivery. We consistently deliver reliable, efficient and accurate systems to a precise schedule.

IPL is an ISO9001:2000/TickIT registered company having a permanent workforce of 240, revenues of ca. £21M p.a. and 40,000 sq ft of secure office space in central Bath.



A single version of the truth

The challenge

IPL's client is one of the world's largest global energy companies, generating revenue in excess of \$240 billion in 2004. The enterprise has grown vastly over the years. This growth has mainly been inorganic in nature, due to large number of takeovers, mergers and acquisitions of other related petrochemical companies.

As a result, there are now many disparate systems supporting the same processes across the enterprise. There is currently no single system or data source that can be interrogated to find details of all the products manufactured and sold by our client or details of all the customers that our client has on its books across the enterprise.

The provision of enterprise-wide, 'single version of the truth' Master Data repositories, would rationalise the current plethora of data sources. This would better inform management, resulting in increased revenue; reduced risk (due to compliance related issues) and reduced costs (as a result of reduction in duplicated effort). The predicted resultant organic growth would have substantial monetary benefits to our client.

This need to effectively manage Master Data across the entire enterprise was the driving force for the involvement of IPL during the early stages of our client's Master Data programme. The initial challenge was to produce a convincing business case and generate sufficient interest amongst the diverse business units within the enterprise, for the adoption of the Master Data concept.

Master data

IPL initially provided consultancy expertise, working with our client's own Enterprise Architecture Group to define a Master Data development approach. This approach was tightly coupled with our client's own project definition methodology and recommended how to take a prescribed data subject area (e.g. customer data) from conception through to provision in a central data repository, available to the entire enterprise.

In parallel to this initial consultancy task, one specific data subject area (Geographic Master Data) was chosen to illustrate the value of the Master Data approach. A variety of different business areas were consulted to determine their Master Data needs. International external providers of this Master Data were investigated together with the standards which should apply (e.g. ISO, UN, ITU etc). A Geographic data repository and associated web-based delivery mechanisms were successfully constructed and hosted within our client's domain. The required Geographic Data content was procured from a carefully selected third party supplier together with the associated provenance information. This was also published to the business through the bespoke web-based interface.

An end-to-end demonstration of the Master Data concept was also developed using an existing "Person" directory system. This was rewritten to be a consumer of Geographic Master Data to demonstrate how the Master Data concept would work in practice.

Web services were implemented to provide the interface between the Master Data Repository and the consuming directory system.

The highlights

A methodology was developed providing a standard, consistent, repeatable technique for developing Master Data independent of data subject area. This approach was delivered to all development teams and partners via an intranet portal.

Consistent, accurate Master Data for the first of the data subject areas was successfully made available to the enterprise. Data provenance and details of the applicable standards was provided in an easily available form via the IPL-developed catalogue feature released with the prototype. To support the further roll-out of the concept, Master Data training and education workshops were delivered in multiple countries.

A Business system consuming and contributing Master Data via an Enterprise Repository was clearly demonstrated for the first time. Evidence of a decoupled Master Data repository distributing Master Data via web services was demonstrated in action.

Data governance

After successfully completing the first phases of the Master Data Repository programme, IPL went on to develop a Data Governance Portal. This is now available as a web service to the client's entire data modelling community (200 modellers, 5000 analysts). IPL extensively tailored MS SharePoint to manage the users' workspace. Key functions of the portal are:

- Sign-on and permissions management
- Access and licence management for the Embarcadero data modelling toolset
- Visibility of other users
- Access to corporate library of data models
- Access to training resources and corporate standards

A key element in realising the portal was the development of an interface between SharePoint and the Embarcadero toolset using Web Services.



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