



Success Story: Innovative Health Strategies, Inc.

Innovative Health Strategies Dramatically Cuts Batch Processing Time by 98% Using SyncSort

Organizational Profile

- A professional services firm that provides health care data analysis, software, and consulting to pharmaceutical manufacturers

Business Need

- Reduce the batch processing time of a business intelligence application

Environment

- Dell 8450 8 way servers with 4 CPUs
- Windows 2000
- MS SQL Server Enterprise Edition

Benefits

- SyncSort cut the elapsed time of IHS's batch processing by 98%, from 30 hours to just 35 minutes
- IHS praised the technical support it received from Syncsort
- Due to its performance, IHS integrated SyncSort into several other data manipulation applications

"The bottom line is, once we used SyncSort on the full files, we got outstanding results."

Steve Tylke
IT Development Project Lead
IHS

The Challenge:

How does a doctor learn about the latest prescription drugs that are available? Many times it's through a meeting with a sales representative from a pharmaceutical company. The rep explains all of the benefits of the drug, providing brochures, lab test results and other material. So how do the pharmaceutical companies determine the effectiveness of their marketing program with doctors? They turn to Innovative Health Strategies, Inc. (IHS), located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. IHS is a professional services firm that provides health care data analysis, software, and consulting to pharmaceutical manufacturers. Founded in 1995, IHS has assembled a team of health care and information systems specialists dedicated to helping their customers meet the ever-changing challenges of the managed healthcare market.

IHS recently developed a new solution to process large amounts of individual prescription drug transactions and individual physician data they obtain from pharmaceutical companies. This data is analyzed using their managed care physicians' prescription performance measuring tool. Director of Application Development Paul Dausman described the project: "The data can be accessed on our Web site by account and district sales managers for the pharmaceutical companies. They're able to use the tool to measure the performance of their managed care plans and how well physicians for those plans are prescribing their product. Since we have a record of every prescription that a physician has ever written, the data gets to be quite large."

"We had to process the prescription information files by running them through our ETL tool to turn the file from a horizontal to a vertical, but that was taking over nine hours," explained Steve Tylke, IT Development Project Lead at IHS. "Then we had to rip through the file again to perform other detailed conversions. It was taking an additional four to five hours to do that. We needed better performance." For this application, the company uses Dell 8450 8 way servers with 4 CPUs and 8GB of memory running Windows 2000. The database engine is MS SQL Server Enterprise Edition.

The Solution:

Tylke heard about the performance advantages he could achieve using SyncSort in the application and wanted to test to see if it could complete the processing faster. New SyncSort applications were created to sort, summarize, reformat and filter the medical information files. The data was first sorted and reformatted using SyncSort. When there were equal records, only one would be retained. Records identified with a '0' were filtered out. During the initial tests of the new procedures, SyncSort dramatically reduced the time needed to perform all these operations. "The bottom line is, once we used SyncSort on the full files, we got outstanding results," Tylke said. "Without SyncSort, we had individual conversions that ran in excess of 30 hours. During our benchmarks

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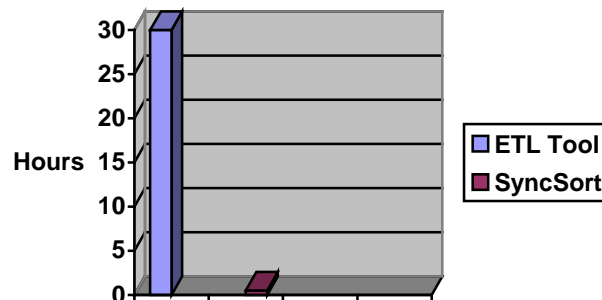


with SyncSort, we were impressed by the turnaround time. We couldn't believe it was done so quickly. Our first run with SyncSort was about 35 minutes. We were able to optimize that even further with a production turnaround time of approximately nine minutes on our larger files."

For the solution, the company receives the compressed data on various media. Tylke explains, "We transfer the data to our file system, making sure that we eliminate any blanks or zeros. Then we completely fill the numeric fields with zeros so that it's a padded zero field. For the second step, we concatenate the output files from the first step. We use SyncSort to select distinct physicians and locations. This data then gets moved into a data mart. Using SyncSort, the first step takes just over three minutes. The second step takes almost five minutes."

The Benefits:

Throughout the testing and implementation, IHS received assistance from Syncsort Technical Support. "It's one of the best support teams that we work with. Not only do they have answers, but they have examples." And after realizing the performance benefits of SyncSort, IHS has integrated it into other projects. Tylke explained, "We're using SyncSort for joining and filtering on other data manipulation projects." With these performance gains, IHS is able to quickly provide the pharmaceutical companies with the critical data they need to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs.



SyncSort cuts the elapsed time of a business intelligence application by 98%, from 30 hours to just 35 minutes

About SyncSort

SyncSort is the high-performance commercial sort and data manipulation utility for UNIX, Windows, Linux and mainframe environments. 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. For more information or to arrange for a free trial, call Syncsort at (201)930-8200 or visit www.syncsort.com.