



SPARDAT Standardizes on DataDirect for Reliable and Uncomplicated Data Access

Goal: Implement reliable, standardized data connectivity for a homogeneous IT landscape.

Why they chose DataDirect:

Interoperability within IT infrastructure, including access to DB2 on the mainframe, desktop systems, and Unix servers. Also reliable, high-performing, and uncomplicated data access.

Business benefits: Application

developers can focus on quickly creating applications that can access company databases, strengthening the company's competitive advantage.

Technical benefits: ODBC drivers do not

require native database interfaces, removing an unnecessary communication level and making it easier to deploy applications. JDBC drivers guarantee a high-performance connection to their J2EE platform and DB2 on z/OS.

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Hans Tiroch
Chief Architect and Manager of
Architecture, Strategy & Focus,
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For more information, go to:

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For more information on SPARDAT, go to:

<http://www.sparkasse.at/spardat/home/>

SPARDAT, an IT service provider for leading Austrian financial companies, uses DataDirect Technologies' database drivers in three applications which access DB2 mainframe computer data from Unix servers. SPARDAT chose DataDirect Connect for JDBC and DataDirect Connect for ODBC to replace existing IBM DB2 Connect software, which was considered too cumbersome. DataDirect products offered a more tailor-made and attractively priced solution.

Responsible for IT development for the Austrian Sparkasse, SPARDAT looks after millions of lines of code for applications involved in information gathering and reporting, but also in data mining. A number of these applications must work with each other on Unix servers and mainframes. “A modern IT infrastructure is like the workings of a clock. The better the individual parts connect with each other, the more reliably the system works and the easier it is to keep the mechanism running smoothly. One cog must connect with the next,” says Hans Tiroch, chief architect and manager of Architecture, Strategy & Focus at SPARDAT Sparkassen-Datendienst Gesellschaft m.b.H. in Vienna. “Data Connectivity is a central factor in these scenarios. High-performing, reliable and uncomplicated data access is crucial for the direct accessibility of information.”

This is where the SPARDAT system architects are needed. They design, develop and test the applications whilst IT-Austria is responsible for the actual production operations. IT-Austria was created with the merger of the computer centre of Bank Austria and SPARDAT (SARZ), CA Information Technology and the computer centre of Erste Bank, and is now the most important computer centre for financial services in Austria.

Database Access to Mainframes

The business purpose of SPARDAT is the development and management of banking software along with the accompanying launch support and training. Measured by the number of lines of code, almost one fifth of the applications managed by SPARDAT run on desktop systems and Unix servers, and four-fifths on IBM mainframes. The system architects and developers are therefore always busy with the interaction of Unix and host servers.

In this situation, developers depend on standardised data connectivity. This gives them the possibility of giving their applications flexible and yet high-performance access to databases without the need to develop them. In view of the heterogeneous landscapes and their multitude of technologies, which are beyond the grasp of the individual developers, programming interfaces and connectivity middleware is extremely time-consuming. By using standardised data connectivity solutions such as ODBC (Open Database Connectivity) or JDBC (Java Database Connectivity), developers are able to concentrate entirely on implementing their specific requirements. With the use of these types of database drivers, the IT landscape again becomes mostly homogeneous from the application developers' perspective.

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Three-Pack Connectivity

At present, SPARDAT uses the database drivers DataDirect Connect *for* JDBC and DataDirect Connect *for* ODBC in three applications. After the necessary quality tests, all three will enter production:

1. Reporting/Valuation: An application used by advisers in Sparkasse branches which allows them to collate information online and via the web for meetings with customers.
2. Reporting: At present, around 200,000 items are calculated monthly as banking statistics are forwarded to the Austrian National Bank.
3. Data Mining: A tool with which the Data Mart is 'filled' from the data warehouse which is stored centrally on a host with IBM DB2. The Data Mart is maintained under Oracle on a Sun server.

In the two technical infrastructure applications Reporting/Valuation and Reporting, DataDirect Connect *for* JDBC is used, while DataDirect Connect *for* ODBC is used for the Data Mining application. Previously, SPARDAT had used the IBM product DB2 Connect for access to Sun on the DB2 database running on IDM z/OS.

"But an exact analysis of our connectivity needs showed that IBM's DB2 connect software was too big for our purposes," explains Tiroch. Market research, with assistance from the Gartner Group, revealed the database drivers from DataDirect were functionally evenly matched with IBM's software. Tiroch continues, "The decision itself was driven solely by infrastructure concerns. DataDirect Connect *for* JDBC and DataDirect Connect *for* ODBC showed themselves to be tailor-made solutions for our uses. Above all, SPARDAT achieves an optimal cost/benefit ratio from a licence perspective." Ultimately, the end-user advisers would also notice major benefits. "Based on the high quality data, they can support and advise the customer selectively in money matters better than ever before."

Tiroch adds, "DataDirect Connect *for* JDBC offers an extremely successful combination of functionality, reliability, scalability and ease-of-use. The Type 4 JDBC driver guarantees a high-performance connection to the Java platform J2EE – in our case BEA WebLogic – with IBM DB2 running on z/OS. The software development kit included in Connect *for* JDBC contributes to this considerably by allowing developers quickly and simply to create Java applications which can access company databases."

One particularly strong point of DataDirect Connect *for* ODBC, which operates in the data mining application, is its Wire Protocol architecture, Tiroch stresses: "The software does not have native database interfaces. Instead, the driver communicates directly with IBM DB2's Wire Level Protocol. As a result, DataDirect Connect *for* ODBC completely removes an unnecessary communication level."

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Summary

With the two DataDirect drivers, according to Tiroch, SPARDAT has succeeded in creating a uniform, standardised access process to DB2. The IT manager is convinced: "The more complicated the IT infrastructure, the more important each individual component becomes – in this case the connectivity modules." Based on the strategic platform now created, he sees prospects for other possibilities: "We are now starting to consider Basel II and credit risk management applications," says Tiroch. The heart of the matter is to segment customers by creditworthiness. The new equity capital rules of the Basel Commission on Banking will allow a financial institution's capital support to depend on the debtors' creditworthiness. To do this, extensive amounts of data have to be analysed. Thus, according to Tiroch: "We return to the core competence of connectivity software: accessing data from different sources and processing this as smoothly as possible."