



Wire Protocol ODBC Driver 'Drives' Instability out of Subaru's Database Access

Goal: Stable and efficient access to its heavily used Sybase vehicle database to fix episodes of instability in current system.

Why they chose DataDirect: Track record of providing reliable and high-performance data connectivity components. And better performance to Sybase through wire protocol architecture.

Business benefits: Stable and secure environment for dealers to access customer data for better customer service.

Technical benefits: Reliability and performance. Does not require installation of Sybase client libraries.

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Mike Stanton
IT Project Manager/E-Commerce,
Subaru of America

All IT managers know that system or application crashes produce heavy productivity penalties. Not only is time lost while applications are down, but users lose faith in systems, and may revert to unauthorized or inefficient procedures to get around them. Moreover, customer service may suffer. This is the challenge that recently faced Subaru of America.

As the marketing and administrative offices for all Subaru vehicle sales and service warranty operations, Subaru of America's Cherry Hill, N.J. headquarters provides support for about 600 franchised Subaru dealers in the nation.

Key support to dealers is delivered through an extranet, Subarunet.com. This password-accessed Web site provides a number of services, such as access to information on parts and accessories, marketing and sales promotions data, as well as a claim entry portal. Subarunet.com replaced a text-based system that required dealers to dial up Subaru each time they wanted to query (or make entries into) vehicle information databases. "In many ways, Subarunet.com is an always-on interface between the Subaru dealers and our legacy systems," explained Mike Stanton, IT project manager/e-commerce.

Vehicle service records and claims information is stored in Sybase databases on UNIX servers. The databases are heavily used resources, as Subaru dealers access the data via Subarunet.com to check on information such as warranty claims or coverage, and the history of repairs that have been made on a customer's vehicle. Stanton estimates that dealers use Subarunet.com to check on approximately 60,000-70,000 claims per month, sometimes retrieving claim information from up to two years ago.

Oracle databases are used for the initial entry of dealer inquiries, and also contain parts data to support supply chain management operations. "Claims are maintained in working status until dealers are ready to submit them to Subaru," explained Stanton. Ultimately, claim and coverage history for vehicles is moved into the Sybase database.

Due to the high volume of transactions and the age of the data connectivity components being used to access the database, Subarunet.com began experiencing episodes of instability. "Frequently, we could access the Sybase data fine, but we were having intermittent problems that prevented dealers from gaining access to critical claims information on a regular basis," said Stanton. "Customer service is of utmost importance to us, so we knew we had to fix the problem, and ultimately create a stable and secure environment for dealers to access customer data."

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For more information on Subaru, go to:
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In searching for the source of the problem, Subaru determined that its existing ODBC drivers were not as current as they should be, and didn't provide the latest functionality. Looking for an ODBC driver that would be able to address the instability problem didn't take long. Subaru's IT staff turned to DataDirect Technologies, the industry leader in data connectivity, headquartered in Rockville, M.D. "We quickly found out that DataDirect had a long track record of providing very reliable and high performance data connectivity components,"

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said Stanton. Subaru decided to use DataDirect's Wire Protocol ODBC driver for Sybase.

The DataDirect Wire Protocol driver takes advantage of the full ODBC specification, including ODBC Core, Level 1 and Level 2 functions. And, unlike traditional ODBC drivers, the DataDirect Wire Protocol driver implements a unique architecture that eliminates the need to install and use Sybase's client library software. This means that Subarunet.com has one less layer to go through before it can access the Sybase database. "DataDirect's Wire Protocol driver not only speeds the performance of our Subarunet.com application, but it also reduces the overhead on our system, and increases the reliability," said Stanton.

Subaru's ODBC driver implementation process lasted about four weeks. "After we downloaded the 'eval' version, it took three to four weeks to implement the driver," said Stanton, adding that there were no glitches as the project moved from development through QA, implementation and production.

Now that the DataDirect Wire Protocol ODBC driver for Sybase has been up and running, Stanton reported that the stability issues have been completely eliminated. "It's working as advertised and doing exactly what we wanted it to do."