



# Simple Datamasking™

## Universal data masking with a simple, flexible approach

### Mitigating risk using data masking in business and market intelligence

### A Grid-Tools Case Study: PowerAdvocate

#### Summary

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Accurate and secure data for development and testing is critical to the success and reliability of application development.

PowerAdvocate, a leading market and business intelligence vendor for the energy sector, required an intelligent and intuitive data masking solution to de-identify customer records taken from a large production database. The cleaned data was to be distributed among twenty-five developers and to be used for development and testing. The SaaS Platform, PowerAdvocate's signature solution, is a web application which allows users to intelligently manage their energy spend, cost, market and sourcing.

The in-house development of data-masking scripts was deemed too complicated and time consuming, as the development team was already busy with ongoing projects. Without the quick deployment of an industrial strength data masking solution, the team would be unable to successfully complete their projects in the scheduled time frame.

PowerAdvocate used Grid-Tools Simple Data Masking™ solution to de-identify over forty-two million rows of sensitive and private information held in an Oracle database.

#### The transformation of a risky process

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“Due to our internal audit and rigorous security measures, it was a top priority for sensitive data to be completely de-identified before distributing it among twenty-five developers in our headquarters”, explained Liz Nedierman, PowerAdvocate's QA Manager. “We considered writing the masking scripts ourselves, which probably would have taken about three to four months of work.”

One of the key features PowerAdvocate was looking for throughout their investigation was a ‘find and replace’ function, which allowed data to be pinpointed and de-identified in a matter of seconds. The masked data would be used to test their products, so the data needed to look legitimate and authentic.

“We have a lot of fields in our web based solution that are open text so customers can type whatever they want in there. Some of these fields require data such as plant names, names of customers and site locations. We needed ‘real’ looking, useful data to test these features”, explained Liz.

“The find and replace features were also important for us because we needed to discover specific words or terms like names, for example, and then replace them with another word, leaving the rest of the field completely intact. Simple Data Masking was the only solution we found with this type

of functionality. It allowed us to keep a lot of our original data, allowing the data to perform as if it were real without inhibiting the developer's ability to adequately test the applications", added Liz.

## The right choice for data masking tooling

After investigating multiple solutions and considering writing the masking scripts in-house, PowerAdvocate chose to purchase the licence for the Grid-Tools Simple Data Masking software. "We looked at other software and we couldn't find anything that quite compared to this solution. The 'find and replace' feature was really quite something for us, combined with the fact that the tool was incredibly easy to use. We initially had a web demonstration from Huw Price, one of Grid-Tools technical gurus, and it was pretty obvious from the first instance that this would be our solution", said Liz.

The team were also impressed with the basic interface of the tool, and the fact it was incredibly simple to learn. Liz explained, "As an IT professional and QA Manager with a software development background, I found the tool to be well organized, powerful and incredibly simple. It's been a relief not to sit behind a complicated UI where I simply cannot figure out how to do anything. I was able to easily see exactly what I was doing to my database without a tricky interface, and the use of Excel files was great because I could just fill in the lines for different columns and functions easily."

Liz was also more than satisfied with the support given to her team by the Grid-Tools support department. "Any time I had a problem or issue, the Grid-Tools support team would come back with a solution within an hour. They have just been unbelievably helpful and responsive. I also found the Simple Data Masking documentation to be incredibly solid, explaining easily how each function works and its parameters."

## A satisfied customer

PowerAdvocate is now successfully using Simple Data Masking to secure and de-identify sensitive records across all their development and test environments. It has helped them to provision high-quality, legitimate data for multiple and varied projects and has improved their already meticulous security standards.

"The tool has even more functionality than we expected, and Grid-Tools support keep providing us with new features", commented Liz. "We're doing a lot of 'find and replace', but the ability to build our own seed tables, which can then be used to randomly populate columns with the look and feel of production data, has been incredibly useful to us. Likewise, the application won't allow us to overwrite columns with any dependencies, so the database integrity is always maintained without even thinking about it."

When asked about the return on investment PowerAdvocate has achieved from the solution, Liz stated, "When we considered writing the masking scripts ourselves, this probably would have taken us about three to four months of work. I had about 60% masking coverage immediately using Simple Data Masking and I was instantly creating masked data in minutes. What would have taken three to four months of my time took only two weeks of my time."

When asked about whether or not she would recommend the solution to other organizations, Liz said, "Simple Data Masking is well worth the cost to the end-customer. If you really know your database and are looking for a powerful tool to quickly de-identify your data with an incredibly nominal effort, Simple Data Masking is fantastic. I would definitely recommend the solution to any organization with data masking requirements. It is incredibly powerful, the Grid-Tools team are helpful and it has a great price point compared to competitors."

**For more information about Simple Data Masking, please visit:  
[www.grid-tools.com/products/simple\\_data\\_masking](http://www.grid-tools.com/products/simple_data_masking)**

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