



The Client

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.

It is incredibly powerful, the Grid-Tools team are helpful and it has a great price point compared to competitors.

CASE STUDY

THE PROBLEM

The company needed to be able to completely de-identify to be distributed amongst the development team whilst retaining the nature and referential integrity of the original data.

THE SOLUTION

PowerAdvocate chose to use 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 SATISFIED CUSTOMER

The leading market intelligence company for the energy sector.

The key problem

“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 Tool in Use

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

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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

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.”

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