

HOW GRID-TOOLS MAKES PROGRESS



ACCESS TO ANY DATA MEANS NO MORE LIMITATIONS FOR PROGRESS PARTNER GRID-TOOLS

A large healthcare organization plans to migrate a critical business system to take advantage of the solution's latest enhancements. But the complexity and inherent risks involved with such a project are enormous. The system contains sensitive information about thousands of customers, and the company is legally bound to comply with stringent privacy regulations. Yet, to ensure the success of the project, the organization needs to grant numerous developers access to this data for testing purposes without divulging those pieces of information protected by privacy standards. So what's the solution?

Progress partner Grid-Tools specializes in end-to-end test data management techniques and best practices that help organizations solve exactly this type of problem. A global organization headquartered in the UK, Grid-Tools' Datamaker™ is an innovative and advanced test data management tool with the ability to create, manage, manipulate and enhance test and development data.



CHALLENGE

Meeting the needs of customers and prospects with the ability to connect to any data or mainframe source without compromising customer information

SOLUTION

Progress® DataDirect® Connect® and Progress® DataDirect® Shadow®

BENEFIT

No more limitations a significant competitive advantage; able to pursue new opportunities; reduced development work and costs

“High quality data is crucial—whether you are testing new applications or developing existing ones,” explains Jessica Jones, Head of Marketing and PR for Grid-Tools. Today, most organizations store and maintain roughly 12-15 copies of production databases for testing, development, training and QA. But as production databases slowly grow and become increasingly complex, finding alternative ways to provision test environments while creating, managing and securing test data becomes invaluable. “With a well-rounded test data management strategy, companies can reduce inefficiencies, validate test and development processes and increase the quality and consistency of testing and test data.”

CLOSING THE GAPS

Grid-Tools’ customers include some of the largest and most important government agencies, financial institutions, telecoms, insurance providers and media and communications corporations around the globe. But in response to various countries passing new privacy legislation, the company has seen a sharp increase in the number of healthcare and financial services companies turning to it for assistance.

In the past, companies testing new products, modifying developments to existing applications, or conducting migrations, have typically copied data from production—data that is often highly sensitive and personal. But David Little, Presales Consultant for Grid-Tools, explains that the inherent risk is making this practice less acceptable, and companies are looking for ways to better control and manage this data.

“Our toolset allows our customers to generate data, rather than copy it from production, in a very sophisticated way. Or a company can copy specific cases and specific records from production, even whole databases, and we can obfuscate or mask the data, removing the personal information and any associated risk, such as fines, unhappy customers and bad publicity.”

Grid-Tools has maintained market leadership over the years by focusing on both meeting its customers’ requirements today and anticipating their needs tomorrow. “We continue to be an innovator and leader in this space by working with organizations and anticipating their future requirements,” explains Jones. Realizing the situation would only become more complicated for financial services and healthcare companies, Grid-Tools sought to close any potential connectivity gaps and further reduce the risk to its customers. Grid-Tools recently partnered

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*Jessica Jones
Head of Marketing and PR
Grid-Tools*

with Progress Software to integrate Progress® DataDirect® Connect® and Progress® DataDirect® Shadow® into its arsenal of tools.

“Datamaker needs the ability to connect with a customer’s backend data source and backend data target. We use the native database drivers to connect with the most common database sources in place today. But, if for some reason Datamaker doesn’t perform particularly well with the native database driver, or if we find an issue with the native database driver, we can now turn to the DataDirect Connect database drivers, which are world class,” says Little.”

Connecting to mainframe sources, particularly the ability to connect to VSAM files and IMS, has also been an ongoing struggle for Grid-Tools’ industry. “Mainframes are the equivalent of a ‘glass house’ to the industry, notoriously difficult to get into for any external application. This is especially true for the financial and banking industries, because most of them have mainframe data sources within their infrastructure,” says Little. “DataDirect Shadow provides a very clean cut, ODBC, JDBC type connectivity to mainframe data sources. Our toolset is based on ODBC and JDBC connectivity, so it was a natural fit.”

A “CLEAR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE” WITH PROGRESS® DATADIRECT®

With the addition of DataDirect Connect and DataDirect Shadow, Grid-Tools is now able to offer something its competitors cannot, particularly in regards to obfuscating and masking. Jones explains: “Some of our competitors are still struggling with the ability to connect to their customers’ mainframe data sources, or they just don’t offer the capability at all. With the addition of our Progress products, we now have zero limitations; that is a clear advantage over our competition and an advantage for our customers as well.”

When it comes to connecting through to mainframe data sources, Little says there are very few solutions that compete with DataDirect Shadow. Shadow enables cost-effective mainframe integration through its single, unified architecture. And its intuitive interface increases developer productivity for improved project ROI. “When we do make contact with a customer that has mainframe data sources, our first thought is to use Shadow as the conduit to reach the data and allow our toolset to work in the way it was designed to work, with an ODBC, JDBC driver. That means we have to do very little development work.”

For Grid-Tools, performance has proven to be a key benefit. DataDirect Connect database drivers dramatically outperform competitive drivers in throughput, CPU efficiency and memory footprint, resulting in faster response times, more scalable applications, and less hardware required to support applications. “Connect offers high-performance drivers. Just one driver will work with multiple releases of a database versus using a native database driver which may require two, three or even four different drivers to accomplish the same task,” explains Little. It is also to the customer’s advantage to purchase a tool from one vendor that can cover many different environments, versus a mix matched set of tools from various vendors or open source options.

Little says that there are some pieces of functionality that DataDirect can handle far better than the native database driver, and that translates into reduced costs for Grid-Tools and for its customers. It can also serve as a competitive differentiator in a proof of concept (POC) situation. “If the native database driver doesn’t achieve what the prospect is expecting, then we have the option to quickly switch in the DataDirect Connect driver and overcome those issues. DataDirect can mean the difference between getting a customer’s business and losing it to the competition.”

With DataDirect as part of its toolkit, the company is now poised to pursue new opportunities. “Connect and Shadow give us the advantage to go after a new type of customer,” says Jones. “Instead of scrambling around trying to figure out a fix or a solution, or literally just telling the customer or prospect we couldn’t support their requirements, we can now confidently say that we have no limitations.”

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*David Little
Presales Consultant
Grid-Tools*

GRID-TOOLS

Grid-Tools is the leading test data management vendor internationally; specializing in test data management tools and solutions. Headquartered in Oxford, UK (with offices in Chicago and India), Grid-Tools specializes in data masking, data creation and test data management tools, solutions and services. Their experienced personnel have been writing and developing solutions

PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation (NASDAQ: PRGS) is a global software company that enables enterprises to be operationally responsive to changing conditions and customer interactions as they occur. Our goal is to enable our customers to capitalize on new opportunities, drive greater efficiencies, and reduce risk. Progress offers a comprehensive portfolio of best-in-class infrastructure software spanning event-driven visibility and real-time response, open integration, data access and integration, and application development and management—all supporting on-premises and SaaS/cloud deployments. Progress maximizes the benefits of operational responsiveness while minimizing IT complexity and total cost of ownership.

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