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Jeff Ivinski, Maersk
General Manager of Sales and Marketing Processes

Maersk

Data Synchronization Software From Synchrologic Helps Maersk Rule the Waves

Solution cut data transmission costs by 95 percent, improved management information quality and reliability, and boosted customer service levels.



Back in 1904, Captain Peter Moller didn't have to worry about tracking cargo or managing data — he just wanted to make sure that the goods showed up on time. But 95 years after Moller and his son, Arnold Peter Moller, founded the Maersk Line shipping company, things were not so simple.

The Challenge — Industry Deregulation

In those early days, the Mollers sailed a single ship between Denmark and the Far East. Today, as the general agent for the A.P. Moller Group in North America, Maersk has a fleet of 120 vessels calling on 6,000 ports in over 35 countries. Competition in the modern shipping industry is intense, keeping profit margins razor thin.

That unforgiving business environment got even tougher when the US deregulated shipping rates in late 1999. Amid such upheaval, any advantage was vital. Maersk decided to look for substantial efficiencies through better information management.

Information had become critical to the success of Maersk's business. The company had to track each container on every vessel, determine the most profitable mix of cargo, and ensure that they were operating as near capacity as possible. Moreover, they had to make sure they met the shipping needs of their premium customers, even on short notice.



INDUSTRY	APPLICATIONS	PRODUCTS
Shipping	Sophisticated customer relationship management and cargo tracking system	iMobile Data Synchronization for PCs



The Solution — GAMP & Synchrologic

Both at the corporate and field level, speedy widespread access to a sea of data became the key to Maersk's successful future.

To that end, Maersk implemented Global Account-Based Marketing Plan (GAMP), an expansive database application with client data used for logistical planning, customer service, and decision support. GAMP maintained more than 10 million records in a Microsoft SQL Server database. It allowed Maersk's New Jersey headquarters and their nationwide field reps to have access to the same up-to-the-minute information.

With GAMP, Maersk can track customer cargo, shipping destination, cargo mix, and rates on each container. This real-time information enables field reps to ensure ships don't sail with empty space and Maersk meets its best customers' needs. GAMP also assures more accurate business forecasts. All of this adds up to improved productivity for field reps and competitive advantage for the company.

Roughly 400 users, about half of them mobile sales people using laptops, tap into GAMP to update data constantly. With GAMP, instead of 1-2 MB of local data, the reps have between 20-100MB of manageable, current data at hand. This increased information lets them perform analysis, complete reports, and make superior decisions at the local level. As a result, Maersk is able to better serve their customers.

"A key part of our overall strategy was developing more dialogue with customers," explained Jeffrey H. Ivinski, Maersk's general manager of sales and marketing processes. "When field reps go to meet with their customers, now they carry the latest

information with them on their laptops and answer questions on the spot. This information access gave Maersk's sales reps an enormous competitive advantage in the field."

Synchrologic Unleashes GAMP's Potential

At the root of GAMP's effectiveness is the fact that all Maersk users, at corporate and in the field, work with the same projections — the data is synchronized. Instead of corporate periodically preparing and sending static reports to the field, users work with all the data they need to do their job. Synchrologic software ensures that data on the mobile PC databases matches data in the centralized GAMP system.

"The project will have a return on investment (ROI) over the next three years of almost 1500% and a payback of 7 months."

Jeff Ivinski, Maersk
General Manager of Sales
and Marketing Processes

"After using GAMP for a while, we saw that data synchronization was a problem and knew we had to come up with a different synching tool," Ivinski said. "That's where Synchrologic came in. The bottom line is GAMP would not be the effective tool it is today without Synchrologic. It has made GAMP extremely efficient, and enabled us to achieve, from a systems perspective,

what we definitely want to achieve: distributing large quantities of accurate, up-to-date information throughout the organization, even to mobile users."

The Benefits

Slashed Communication Costs

With Synchrologic's help, Maersk slashed annual data transmission costs 95 percent — from \$300,000 to about \$14,000. All over the Far East and North America, four hundred users receive uniformly updated information in a fraction of the former transmission time.

Throughout the day, hundreds of field representatives communicate revised information to the home office for redistribution to relevant users. Synchrologic's data synchronization software effectively manages data collisions and assures reliability, accepting, processing, and distributing up to several hundred million operations between databases.

Easy, Effective Background Synching

Synchrologic's store-and-forward synching software works when computers are idle, updating information across Maersk's sprawling network. When users connect, the updated and accurate data is ready for them. To further expedite the process, server-side preprocessing eliminates the load on the server during heavy usage periods in mornings and evenings.

"I don't think you'll ever find another data synchronization methodology that works in the background this effectively, and can truly get you on and off line in one to three minutes a day," said Jared E. Daum, director of account development at Broden Inc., a Mountain Lakes, NJ consulting firm that helped Maersk design and implement GAMP.

ADVANTAGE

Maersk, Broden, and Synchronologic worked in concert to make synchronization transparent to Maersk users. They called the end result “stealth sync.” After a short period of computer inactivity, without user initiation, Synchronologic software automatically begins synchronizing data. The updated information is ready when users need it, without any additional effort.

“Synchronologic’s software allows us to synchronize automatically in the background,” Ivinski said. “That’s a real key to the system. Plus, we can go out there, talk with our customers, and show them the program we have. Though it was not originally designed to be a selling tool, the system has definitely become one.”

Increased Reliability

Maersk’s old system of compiling shipping forecasts was cumbersome and produced astronomical communication costs. Sales reps would send data to the main server while the main server was sending information back to the laptop database, so the information was never really in sync.

“Prior to Synchronologic, there were all these changes going around and around,” Ivinski explained. “Changes were never applied to the server, or just disappeared. That was a huge concern because all of a sudden, we would have no idea where we were in the sync process and where we had to go. Synchronologic fixed that.”

Improved Reporting

Because of improper synchronization, data was often lost in a sea of confusion. The entire forecasting process essentially collapsed. Instead of having projections complete two weeks before the start of a quarter — Maersk’s goal — people were scrambling to finish projections well into the quarter. The inefficient process was draining resources, both in time and in telephone costs.

The inefficiencies rippled beyond the initial synchronization problems. Field representatives had to manually wade through projections and reports, line by line, for each customer. They then forwarded the data to sales coordinators, who re-entered it in the master spreadsheet for corporate staff to check and adjust. This was not only inefficient, but removed the process from the people who knew it best. Maersk preferred to see the process in the hands of the regional managers who were closer to field representatives’ work. Synchronologic made that possible.

“We knew the process was not as dynamic as it needed to be,” Ivinski said. “It took so long that we had to project a quarter out for the following quarter. We were trying to plan two quarters ahead. But in our industry, many customers don’t know what they need that far ahead. With Synchronologic’s data synchronization built into our application, Maersk can be much more responsive to our customers’ needs.”

A Supportive Partner

The GAMP application, with its large data requirements and complex distribution model, wasn’t a lightweight project, and through the inevitable development challenges, staff at Maersk, Broden and Synchronologic established a strong partnership.

“Synchronologic really listened to our unique needs, and they responded as a genuine partner,” Ivinski said.

Maersk, working with Broden, became a Synchronologic beta tester, and worked with the software maker during development. “There’s nothing else on the market, as far as I can tell, that comes close to Synchronologic,” Daum commented.

Technical Highlights

Several features of Synchronologic’s software made it a clear choice for Maersk:

- Heterogeneous database replication, supporting Microsoft Access on mobile laptops and Microsoft SQL Server at the central server
- ODBC-based, allowing application development largely independent of the synchronization process
- Rules-based information sharing, enabling easy definition of how information is distributed and who would receive it
- Background synchronization, streamlining GAMP’s operation by running while computers were idle
- Transport-independent delivery, allowing Maersk to choose its own transport mechanism based on their existing infrastructure
- Remote management, permitting system administrators to diagnose and fix problems for users in the field

The Competitive Advantage

Faced with an increasingly competitive global market and the dynamics of industry deregulation, Maersk moved aggressively to keep its industry-leading position. Maersk used access to detailed and current information to gain advantage over other players in the industry.

“We believe that our investment in GAMP and Synchronologic was a smart decision. The project will have a return on investment (ROI) over the next three years of almost 1500% and a payback of 7 months. In our industry, those kinds of results are a real achievement,” said Ivinski.



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Jared Daum, Broden, Inc.
Director of Account Development

About Synchronologic, Inc.

Synchronologic is the leading developer of mobile computing infrastructure software for the enterprise. Synchronologic's iMobile Suite allows organizations to support mobile professionals by providing a centrally-managed, internet-based solution for synchronizing data, files, and software between mobile computing devices and company servers.

Heavily leveraging Internet technologies, iMobile Suite provides a secure infrastructure approach to managing mobile devices and sharing vital corporate information with them. iMobile Suite features data synchronization for enterprise applications; automatic distribution, collection, and backup of vital files; and remote software distribution and systems management functionality for tracking and maintaining the mobile devices.

Synchronologic's mobile technologies are licensed by both corporate and OEM customers.

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