



The Government of Western Australia, Department of Finance, Shared Services, provide human resources, finance and online services to approximately 59 agencies comprising 6000 public servants.

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They needed a tool that could handle the incredibly complex Oracle data structures; that could collate each agency’s data and turn it into something useful and meaningful.

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Geoff Costello – Project Manager Data Migration Team

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Customer Overview

The Government of Western Australia, Department of Finance, Shared Services, (Shared Services) provide human resources, finance and online services to approximately 59 agencies.

The Challenge

A policy decision was made to give corporate services processing and data back to the 59 agencies to manage themselves. The government set a tight schedule for this, commencing in 2012, which requires all agencies processing data to be migrated from Shared Services by the end of 2013, and the windup of Shared Services.

The Shared Services team wanted to make it easy for the agencies to take back their “enormous amounts” of data and use it to both load into their new systems as well as to flexibly access historical data. As Carmelo Naso, Executive Manager, Solutions and Technology Support noted, “We needed a tool that could handle the incredibly complex Oracle data structures; that could collate each agency’s data and turn it into something useful and meaningful.”

The tool also needed to:

- ✦ provide a high level of productivity, even on complex data structures;
- ✦ be able to generate sophisticated reports and queries;
- ✦ guarantee data integrity;
- ✦ ensure no data cross contamination;
- ✦ reflect the original data exactly;
- ✦ enable the Shared Services team to easily create a set of predefined, ‘canned’, reports;
- ✦ enable the agency users to build their own reports themselves and;
- ✦ be extremely easy to use and train on.

In addition, the Shared Services team had a very tight time frame to work to, in order to meet the decommissioning schedule of their Oracle solution, with early exiting agencies expecting the first reports in their data extracts mid-June and a largely complete set by the end of July. PhiLight had just two weeks to respond to the initial tender in April. Then, upon receiving confirmation of being the chosen vendor on a Friday, the project started the following Monday. Additionally, all canned reports had to be written in just three months.



The Solution

PhiLight's Project Manager, Donald Wynne, explains the solution, "Essentially, the decommissioning team from Shared Services exported specific data elements out of Oracle and into CSV files. From there we used Sharperlight to convert them into a SQL server format so we could very quickly upload them to a SQL database.

Then, using Sharperlight, we wrote a series of canned reports that could interrogate the SQL database to get the required information.

Using our flexible multi-user licensing model, each agency could afford their own installation of Sharperlight, to access their specific data models that sit over their own SQL database and canned reports, as well as training, to enable their users to write their own reports."

Implementation

The first four weeks were focused on data reconciliation between the Oracle output and the CSV files to confirm data integrity. This delivered an unexpected outcome. The phiLight team uncovered that one of the HR payroll systems had very specific requirements for how their data load formats were produced. The Shared Services team thought they'd have to re-do the entire process, but were delighted to find that Sharperlight was able to convert a highly complex SQL data load format into a much simpler version, making that agency's process easier and quicker for the data load.

As Carmelo Naso commented, "It was a very useful and constructive use of Sharperlight. And one that was completely unexpected."

Just two weeks into the rollout process and the phiLight team started writing the canned reports. The initial intention was to heavily constrain the number of standard reports and write the more complex reports using Oracle PL/SQL. However Sharperlight proved so powerful and productive that all reports were able to be developed in it and the team was able to deliver many more reports in response to agency requests "Once we saw Sharperlight's capabilities the project grew from there with more reports and more uses being found for the solution." Carmelo mentioned.

In August 2012, with all the agreed reports developed, the team faced a new challenge.

Two of the major agencies due to exit later in the year were struggling to transform the complex Oracle sourced HR/Payroll data into a form that could be loaded into their selected HR/Payroll solution.

Management asked the team to find a way to assist these agencies to get their data loaded. With the first major agencies parallel run tests starting in September, time was critical.

According to Geoff Costello, Project Manager for the Data Migration Team, "We assessed our options, we had 23 new files to create, all with many complex data transformations and several with fundamental data structure changes required. Creating these files directly from Oracle using our normal tools just wasn't an option that was possible. So our internal team and the experts from phiLight brainstormed on how we could make Sharperlight produce the files we needed. Everyone in the blended team had a 'can do' attitude and soon we were producing the new conversion files directly from Sharperlight. This provided us with the productivity and the immediate responsiveness to rapidly develop and refine the data extracts.

As a result successful HR/Payroll data loads have been achieved for the two agencies."

Value to the Business

- ✦ Dramatically increased responsiveness to ad-hoc questions, such as those from ministers, parliament and auditors;
- ✦ Flexible, easy and cost effective data interrogation when and how a user requires;
- ✦ Users can quickly and easily navigate massive volumes of data;
- ✦ 'Big picture' views as well as granular detail to a date or individual transaction level;
- ✦ Improved relationships between the agencies and Shared Services;
- ✦ Improved consistency and efficiency through the common use of Sharperlight across agencies.



Customer Profile

The Government of Western Australia, Department of Finance, Shared Services, provide human resources, finance and online services.

Industry

State Government.

Company Size

Approximately 300 staff, servicing 59 agencies encompassing approximately 7,000 staff.

Scenario

How Sharperlight's reporting framework enabled this government department to easily, quickly and accurately extract other departments' vast amounts of data; bundle it up and return it to them in a usable, and valuable format.

Business Situation

Shared Services needed to extract and transform vast amounts of data from complex Oracle databases, but their existing tools were not capable.

Software Solution Summary

- ✦ Sharperlight v2.7
- ✦ Microsoft Excel 2010
- ✦ Microsoft SQL 2008 R2
- ✦ Microsoft .NET 3.5
- ✦ Microsoft Visual Studio 2010
- ✦ Microsoft Internet Explorer

Results

The project is currently being rolled out to all agencies in stages over an eight-month period. To date, the Shared Services team is very happy, as Carmelo explains, "We've been most pleased. Sharperlight is flexible, very easy to use and implement, and the presentation and associated options, such as Excel, are great.

We've had outstanding support from phiLight and have been able to use the product in a way that we never envisaged – Sharperlight is far more flexible than just a reporting tool. We've hit all our deadlines resulting in a very successful outcome. I think the agencies will find it a very useful tool too."

The productivity and flexibility of Sharperlight has also helped the Shared Services team provide better services to agencies, by being able to rapidly respond to requests for new or changed data structures or reports. According to Geoff Costello "We have been able to do in hours what would take days or more in the traditional tools we had before. Sharperlight has enabled us to rapidly tailor reports and data extracts to meet agency requests, often the next day, helping enable them to have a much smoother 'go live'."

The team has also been impressed with the performance of Sharperlight. According to phiLight's Project Manager, Donald Wynne, the team is producing well over 6,000 substantial reports for a larger agency in a 4 hour production run. Geoff Costello added, "The performance of Sharperlight is extremely impressive, running on top of a moderate sized SQL Server it's able to return complex data queries searching many files often faster than our large scale production Oracle Servers".

Specifically, Sharperlight has provided some major benefits:

- ✦ The ability to distribute Sharperlight to all agencies ensuring consistency and no need to build a multitude of reports for different agencies. This is due to phiLight's user-friendly licensing model;
- ✦ Increased responsiveness to ad-hoc questions, such as those from ministers, parliament and auditors, as it is quick and simple to interrogate data on an ad-hoc basis.;
- ✦ Flexible, easy and cost effective data interrogation when and how a user wants;
- ✦ Users can quickly and easily navigate massive volumes of data;
- ✦ 'Big picture' views as well as granular detail to a date or individual level and;
- ✦ Improved relationships between the agencies and Shared Services.

The positive response to Sharperlight has been consistently voiced to the phiLight team, as Donald Wynne explains, "As agencies have seen Sharperlight, they've become very excited about using it because it's so easy to implement over other databases. Users have mentioned that it's a refreshing surprise to find a tool that empowers them, is simple to use and has very low IT support requirements." Agencies are now loading Sharperlight, and the Query and Reporting tool developed for the Shared Services data, as soon as they get their first sample copy of the extracted data, as it provides them with a powerful tool to help plan and use their data for the rest of their projects.

