

FLOW PRODUCTS INC.



One of the new projects that spun out of the IT department was tracking the suppliers performance against projects. Initial findings have been surprising and profitable with over \$30,000 in "found money".

As the lava surges, exploding upwards in a brilliant hue of red the crowd squeals with delight. Such are the sounds that greet the nightly volcanic eruptions at the Las Vegas Mirage Hotel.

To help create this nightly lava illusion, the Mirage turned to PACO Pumps, manufacturer of one of the world's most complete line of centrifugal pumps and pumping systems for every type of market. PACO along with its sister companies Johnston Pump and General Valve are part of the Flow Products Inc. family.

Helping Flow seamlessly move ManMan data through multiple databases is MBF-UDALink (formerly DataExpress) – MB Foster's data access and delivery solution for pumping data from the HP e3000 and HP 9000 platforms. With MBF-UDALink end users are no longer restricted to a set of applications or database specific tools.

Originally purchased for General Valve's day-to-day operations, Flow Products, soon discovered MBF-UDALink ad-hoc capabilities. MIS Manager Tom Ducharme and Senior Analyst John Minkkinen deployed the tool for providing quick answers to management queries. With its efficiencies in pulling data, MBF-UDALink is also utilized in data extractions to build and revise the strategic plans.

"What I like about MBF-UDALink is it allows me to convert very quickly and easily hierarchical data from Image to a relational database with minimum effort," says Minkkinen.

As competition continues to grow on a global scale, Sales Managers and Engineers are demanding timely access to their information (products, sales orders, inventory, deliveries) anywhere and anytime. "IT spent a significant amount of its time preparing and updating these reports. As the need for timely information became more urgent, we explored different solutions. We were really looking for an "in-home data mart solution" as the information was very specific and targeted to only those users. "We realized with some minor programming that MBF-UDALink (formerly DataExpress) could be the solution for this project," continued Ducharme.

"Now, the managers and engineers have their information delivered in reformatted views, which they can update, manipulate and report on without IT worried about "lost data." Business processes generate massive amounts of information. The MBF ManMan Data Mart is a complete solution designed specifically for ManMan applications.

With MBF-UDALink's flexibility and ease of use, end-users have quickly adopted this data extraction tool, providing the MIS department with the opportunity to undertake new projects. "The benefits of MBF-UDALink (formerly DataExpress) have trickled down

to all the branches. It allows the MIS department to function efficiently within the limited staff that Flow has," says Ducharme.

One of the new projects that spun out of the IT department was tracking the suppliers' performance against projects. Initial findings have been surprising and profitable for Flow with over \$30,000 "found money" so far.

With MBF-UDALink pulling raw data from several sources to feed through OMAR, Flow required a tool, which would allow the MIS department to manage the ODBC connections. MBF-Console was purchased for its ability to manage ODBC connections. MBF-Console displays the information related to the PINs connected to the ODBC listener and provides the ability to turn logging on and off ensuring no down time or costly interruptions.

With MBF-UDALink and MBF-Console in production, Flow's IT department turned to their next data access and delivery project – management of the report life cycle following production. Flow knew they needed a solution that would provide security and simplicity. Flow also needed a product that could meet their needs, work within their existing environment and provide a payback of six months or less.

Enter Reveal, a highly effective report and document portal accessible from multiple sources including browsers. Reveal uses a single electronic copy of a report for multiple users. Use of a single electronic copy reduces CPU and network overhead. "Last month we were able to reduce our close cycle by two days and save two cases of paper, not to mention CPU time and toner. The savings just keep adding up," says Ducharme.

The MB Foster Professional Service team was used to assist in implementing MBF-UDALink (formerly DataExpress) and Reveal into Flow's production environment. MBF Services worked hand in hand with Flow's MIS team to implement the products, set up data views (still in use today) and train the users.

"Acquiring the onsite implementation services was the best \$5,000 I spent," claims Ducharme. "The product was installed in an outstanding manner. Potential issues between different technologies were identified and corrected allowing for smooth implementation, the first time – every time."

As long as Flow and its operating partners continue to pump out their products, MBF-UDALink and Reveal will be there to pump true business data intelligence throughout Flow's IT pipelines providing incremental benefits and profits to all divisions.

