

CONNX™ Case Study

Georgia-Pacific - Port Hudson Operations

Not Just Paper Savings - Mill Achieves Effective Management of Operations Using CONNX



- Georgia-Pacific Port Hudson Operations improves control of its business practices - including tracking equipment rentals - with CONNX.
- Division uses CONNX to extend the longevity of its legacy system and help pave the way for its migration efforts.
- Programmers gain additional flexibility and development capabilities, while security remains uncompromised.
- IS implements the CONNX solution without any training needed and at 1/10th the cost of the alternative.

With a corporate plan to move to SAP and Microsoft, technology at Georgia-Pacific is in transition. But the company remains committed to meet users' ongoing needs with cost-effective products that extract more information out of older systems. "We have a business to run," notes David Burns, Information Resource Manager at the company's Port Hudson Operations. "Georgia-Pacific will do the right thing with its software decisions company-wide and each division will need to make sensible technology plans with migration in mind. At Port Hudson Operations, we're going to address users' needs with solutions that maximize our current investment while being responsive to the forward-looking technology direction of the entire corporation."

Part of Georgia-Pacific's Communication Papers Division, Port Hudson Operations in Zachary, Louisiana, produces over 500,000 tons of xerographic, bond and offset printing pages annually, most of which is sold in the continental US. It also produces 250,000 tons of bleached market pulp, a large percentage of which it exports

worldwide. The mill's technology includes a VAXcluster, Windows 3.11, Windows 95, Access 2.0, PATHWORKS and TCP/IP. A Champs legacy system contains its RMS-based purchasing and work order system.

A major operations challenge at the site revolves around managing rental expenses for large equipment that the mill uses only periodically. Until recently, the legacy system did not yield the kind of information about rentals that would ensure effective management of such expenses. Port Hudson Operations needed to improve its reporting capabilities while finding a cost-effective way to maximize the value of its RMS files and to open Champs to PCs.

"Our current solution did not permit the kind of reporting capabilities we wanted," says Burns. "For example, we might have rented machinery for one purpose, then someone else would borrow it for another, extending the amount of rental time. Sometimes, the rental company would not pick equipment up when they were supposed to and

we would be overcharged without realizing it. We wanted an easy-to-use, cost-effective solution to control these activities better and we wanted it fast. We also needed to build applications rapidly to manage other business activities, and we needed a quick, efficient way to provide interfaces to our legacy system."

Systems Analyst Jerry LeBlanc was enlisted to find the answer to the rental tracking problem. "I discovered an existing field in our legacy purchasing system that could identify if an invoice or purchase order was for a rental," he says, "but users could by-pass it when they were writing a requisition. I wanted to kill two birds with one stone by finding a product that would give users a better way to do their own reporting and give them access to our RMS files from their PCs."

LeBlanc had heard about CONNX, an ODBC driver from SolutionsIQ in Bellevue, Washington. "I ordered it and learned it in an hour," recalls LeBlanc. "The other product we considered would have

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required three to four months of training, according to the company that makes it. Plus, that product was 10 times the cost of CONNX. CONNX was a tool that enabled us to tap into our legacy systems and included the capability of providing faster turnaround to users - either for development or for using available PC tools."

With CONNX, LeBlanc quickly created a program that would allow users to report as much as possible about rentals, tracking account numbers, purchase order numbers and even downtime. "They use CONNX as an ODBC driver," he explains. "They get into Access, click on 'attach' and boom, their data is there." Not only is reporting much easier, but also Port Hudson Operations projects annual savings of between \$100,000 and \$200,000 on its rentals thanks to the improved tracking CONNX makes possible.

CONNX proved so effective in its initial use that Port Hudson Operations now relies on it for reporting in other areas. "We're using CONNX for reports about equipment downtime in our converting department, where we convert rolls of paper into sheets," says LeBlanc. "We use it extensively for employee labor reports. We also use it to prepare reports from our legacy system on the work order material and accounts payable distributions needed by our accountants. In fact, we've used CONNX in virtually every system we have here for reporting."

LeBlanc also appreciates CONNX's security features, which let him give programmers the capability to readily update files, while everyone else has read-only access. "CONNX gives us security by the table for each record definition file," explains LeBlanc, "and there's security by the field within the

table." Programmers find CONNX extremely useful. "CONNX makes it easy for our programmers to go to purchase orders and delete whole sections easily, for example. It's really nice for everyone who uses it," he adds.

The way CONNX enabled the company to significantly change its inventory management procedures illustrates how CONNX supports other improvements at Port Hudson Operations. "Now, we're managing pro-actively, rather than reactively," Burns says. "For example, with timelier information, we're cutting excess rental time by two or three days. When we extend the rental for another group, we charge it to that group. This improved control has resulted in substantial cost savings. In addition, CONNX was not expensive to purchase and it saves us a lot of money on development."



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