AirData Limited
uses Elixir Report to deliver reliable and accurate flight plans

"The benefits of using Elixir Reports are tremendous. With this high-performance reporting tool , mission-critical airline flight planning information is generated swiftly and in a timely manner. This has improved the accuracy and provides for high availability of data for our users."

- Chris Haste, Managing Director, AirData

Background

Founded in 1986, AirData specializes in the provision of computerized flight planning and weather briefing services (AirPlan and SwiftOps) to airlines and flight handling companies. AirData is a subsidiary of the Fortune 500 listed World Fuel Services Corporation, establishing its position as a leading flight planning system provider.

Their sister company, BaseOps (Houston), uses the AirData system in addition to their existing solutions, to provide a full 24-hour operations support service to aircraft operators throughout the world.

AirData's current flight planning system, AirPlan3, incorporates navigation, weather and aircraft performance data with both previously saved and automatically generated optimum routings to produce flight plans and crew briefing for their airline and flight handling customers.

Challenge

Based in the UK, AirData faces the constant challenge of processing flight plans correctly, accurately, and speedily for thousands of flight plans every day, worldwide. This is no small feat considering the complexity of modern airspace and steadily increasing traffic volume in today's aviation industry.

The system's original reporting engine was hand crafted to achieve the efficiency required, during the days when hardware resources were rudimentary and scarce. With today's modern equipment, the emphasis on efficiency has to be balanced with flexibility and ease of change. To modify a hard coded report is a time-consuming job that competency in programming and knowledge of the system. All these contribute to high cost of maintenance and slower delivery time.

To be the right replacement for the reporting engine, 3rd party software must be able to leverage the complex logic embedded in the system. Most reporting tools are geared towards reading from databases directly, whilst AirData needs one that can seamlessly read XML data, which its system produces.

Performance and scalability is another major concern. With the software designed and written by its own team of programmers, any amount of optimization can be done if required. However, a 3rd party solution may only allow limited control, while some are entirely closed black box solutions.

Finally, cost effectiveness is important to ensure ROI, considering the total costs of ownership and the upfront costs of migration. Many well-known proprietary solutions may be able to handle large volumes, but this is hardly justifiable when their licensing scheme is based on the number of users.

Solution

After considerable research, AirData found Elixir Technology, which provides a powerful yet cost-effective reporting tool - Elixir Report - a core component of their integrated Business Intelligence solution.

Elixir Report represents years of experience in fine-tuning a report generation process. The design of the templates is done graphically, for both logic and layout, allowing easy modification and also extensibility to include external libraries for more specific processing. This allows AirData to achieve the balance of ensuring ease of maintenance whilst meeting the performance requirements of the system.

Basing on open standard such as Java, XML and Web Services, Elixir Report is able to access XML data natively with built-in advanced processing capability to handle complex XML structure. Having its templates stored in XML also brings a new level of openness, coupled with its underlying Web Services, which makes integration as simple as sending a URL.

With Elixir Report having been in the market since 1999, it has been used by Global 1000 companies for business critical report generation tasks. For example, a healthcare institution based in Singapore generates millions of reports to be sent tovarious hospitals across the country in near real-time. The Elixir team was also readily available to assist in system testing and fine-tuning, including optimization the report templates and the data streaming mechanism to ensure minimized overheads.

To top it all, Elixir Report Server is competitively priced and is licensed on a per server processor. This allows unlimited user connections to generate data and reports from the server. Such a fixed cost model enables AirData to more effectively plan for expansion over time, as opposed to a per-user charging model.

Conclusion

The challenges in bringing AirData's systems to the next level of product-feature and performance were all met with Elixir Report. This includes integration, performance, scalability and cost effectiveness, together with Elixir's outstanding support, making this partnership as solid as it can be

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