



Data Integration for Business Users

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DATA INTEGRATION FOR BUSINESS USERS DRIVES BETTER BUSINESS DECISIONS AND AGILITY

The trick? Provide IT-quality data integration for business users; How a division of AutoTrader reduced partner onboarding from three months to less than a day

Here's a situation playing out at millions of companies across the nation – maybe even yours: your company wants to do business with another company, executives do the negotiations, promises are made, a deal is struck and then it comes time to integrate data and the process slows to a halt.

In one bank we've worked with, that onboarding process took up to a month. For one CRM company, onboarding took up to three weeks.

Integrating data with different fields and categories is a thankless job that is usually thrown onto the IT team. Data quality is very high when IT gets involved, but often times the complexity of the data integration software tool and competing priorities mean integration projects take weeks or months.

Ideally, data integration should be done by the data analysts or customer integration teams that are close to the customers. Serving these customers is their priority and often they are the same team that has already defined the data integration process for IT anyway.

Could there be a way to get IT-quality data integration from a business unit team? That's what we will be exploring with this e-book.



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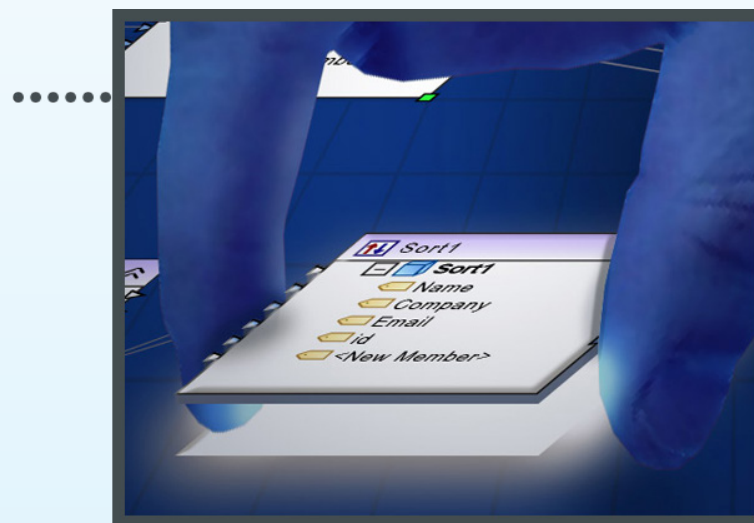


SIMPLIFYING DATA INTEGRATION

Data integration is no easy task...there is a reason it is the realm of IT

Increasing volumes of complex data come into the enterprise in myriad formats from a plethora of sources that must be integrated into the central system. What would a software solution look like that allows a business analyst to conduct data integration? How can it be free from coding and yet still deliver the functionality of an IT-coded solution? Some key technologies for this solution include:

- An intuitive, drag-and-drop interface so business users can quickly and easily create, debug, and manage complex dataflows and construct hierarchical structures without having to know how to write code.
- This includes drag-and-drop data mapping that enables visual mappings of data from source to transformation to destination.
- Comprehensive connectivity to data sources, availability of built-in transformations, and ability to write business rules with ease.
- Reusability so that transformations can be built once and deployed anywhere.
- Automation to streamline data exchanges using scheduling, file drop events, and API calls.



Taken together, this data integration solution manages and automates the complexity of integrating, transforming, and improving the quality of underlying data sources, enabling streamlined processes, greater efficiencies, and smarter, more informed decision making—faster. It enables IT to establish the dataflows in the system and then lets the business analyst implement each data integration and also create subflows that can accommodate any variances in incoming data.

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VINSOLUTIONS/AUTOTRADER.COM SOLVES ITS CHALLENGE

VinSolutions is a company that has experienced the benefits of a business analyst driven data integration solution. The company is a subsidiary of AutoTrader and provides customer relationship management (CRM) functionality to auto dealers. One important function they offer is the ability for dealers to transfer inventory information from their dealer management system (DMS) onto AutoTrader.com and KBB.com – two car information and sales sites owned by their parent company.

VinSolutions' data integration started out with a homegrown system, but as the company grew, it quickly became obvious that the system was not able to scale with the growth in dealer partners and in data. The company onboards 70-100 dealers every month and imports data on 1.2 million vehicles per day. Because each dealer has a DMS with its own configuration, different data mappings are required for each dealer, creating a very complex data integration challenge.

This is what VinSolutions discovered—they needed a solution that could not only scale to the complexity of their data integration requirements, they needed a solution with a user-friendly graphical user interface (GUI) that would enable non-IT users to shoulder much of the day-to-day workload without having to write code.

The solution for VinSolutions was Centerprise Data Integrator from Astera Software. The software features an intuitive, drag-and-drop environment that enabled the non-developers at Vin Solutions to quickly and easily parse and construct hierarchical structures and manage their complex integration jobs faster and more affordably. Centerprise is an approachable data integration solution that significantly lowers the need for IT resources and empowers those who use the data to have a say in how it is processed.

VinSolutions has had the software deployed for nearly two years and it is still paying dividends. In addition to giving the company a scalable ETL solution, VIN Solutions said the software has grown with the company in terms of its ability to keep pace with the need to continually access and integrate data from new sources. For example, VinSolutions is able to quickly and easily integrate data from the websites of Nissan, Kia, Lexus, Toyota, and other manufacturers, including inventory availability.

"One of the big advantages in using Astera is it allowed us in development to build the core data flows, which then allows non-developers in our implementation department to use Astera to build sub-flows to connect into those core data flows. That enabled us to create an environment where we don't have developers doing the actual configuration for every single independent dealer. It allows the variances from dealer to dealer to be configured in Astera by our implementation team building data sub-flows. Trying to write code to do all that—that's a lot of heavy lifting."

Doug Maskill, Director of Integration
VinSolutions



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CAN YOUR BUSINESS BE MORE AGILE?

Data integration is a significant challenge to businesses. Done right, it allows them to be much more agile and to integrate and share data with partners, customers, and vendors/suppliers. This helps to make smarter decisions and also drive stronger partner relationships. That was certainly the case for VIN Solutions, thanks to Centerprise from Astera. And it can also be the case for your company. Want more business agility? Push data integration out into the business units and reap the advantages.



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