



THE CHALLENGE: REMOVING BARRIERS WHILE MAINTAINING PRIVACY

Enterprises often tuck away information in myriad nooks and crannies developed over the years which can be very difficult for others to use and understand. GCA Technology Services calls these “pockets of data,” scattered pouches of information which create huge challenges for IT departments during corporate acquisitions and mergers. The average company has about 120 different pockets of data. When it comes to using native administration tools to add user accounts to each of those resources, multiple ways of making mistakes can occur.

When a regional healthcare alliance that includes nine hospitals on the Gulf Coast needed to perform an enterprise directory server consolidation, GCA was confident they could help but knew the scope of the task. This alliance wanted to consolidate the disparate hardware, software, applications and operating system platforms being used by the various institutions.

The alliance was formed to achieve cost savings for all the hospitals. Sharing technology and resources became a huge factor and consolidation was to be the foundation. Consolidation would, for example, eliminate the need to maintain nine different email servers. From an IT perspective, costs would decrease significantly and they could share applications across different hospitals.

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The key to consolidating the resources of nine entities was ensuring each hospital retained control over its own data while being able to easily share information. With the formation of the alliance, employees needed the ability to access up-to-date contact information, applications and shared corporate resources.

THE PLAN: DECENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATION OF CENTRALIZED DATA

GCA chose Sun Microsystems state-of-the-art identity management solutions based on Sun's renowned Java™ System Directory Server. A directory server approach was selected, instead of a database solution, because of its high scalability.

Sun's lightweight directory access protocol (LDAP) backbone was used by GCA to centralize the hospitals' data into one "pocket" that provided client access from the separate institutions. This arrangement offered decentralized administration of centralized data all through an easy-to-use web interface.

It was a solid base for identity management, one that provided a single repository for storing and managing identity profiles, access privileges, and application and network resource information.

GCA's ingenuity and experience played a big part in dealing with the trickiest aspect of the project: mapping together the hospitals' data and records. There were nine different human resource systems, nine different ways of having data formatted, nine different ways of making sure records were unique and nine different ways of maintaining contractor information versus employee information.

GCA needed to link the different fields of information. Once linked, the data would provide the foundation on which GCA could build applications and provide for the identity infrastructure.

The goal was to provide a platform that allowed administrators to know who had access to what. For this to happen, GCA needed to identify overlapping data or pieces of information that would link this together.

GCA calls this process "cleaning the data." It's a job that often requires great diligence, creativity and tenacity and the experience to avoid hidden pitfalls.

A SUCCESSFUL DEPLOYMENT AND SMOOTH TRANSITION

Combining databases can be very challenging and, in the healthcare alliance project, there were multiple entities involved.

However, once accomplished, and once there was a mechanism to make sure the data was accurate and kept up-to-date, then GCA could build a foundation for creating identity-based applications.

The task entailed combining records for about 17,000 users. It was a tough technological job made even trickier by the understandable human-nature aspects entailed in such a project. GCA needed to address the concerns about security and identity control that were expressed by hospital directors, doctors and human resources managers. They had to show people why it was in their best interest, all across the company.

Despite its difficulty, the data consolidation aspect of the large project took GCA only three months to complete.

It was imperative that all involved felt their concerns were understood and answered. It was equally important for them to work with GCA in determining which groups needed access to what data and applications.

Some very sensitive issues were at hand and GCA needed to get the hospitals' legal departments involved in writing security policies.

Despite its difficulty, the data consolidation aspect of the large project took GCA only three months to complete. GCA's unique qualifications and over a decade of experience had much to do with the speediness. GCA's confidence, expertise and management of the project made the healthcare alliance project a triumphant success.

GCA's experts understand the methodology of having different pockets of data and the process of consolidating them down into a common directory format. They understand directory servers and how to make them work in the most appropriate way.

Call GCA Today To Learn More About What An Identity Management Solution Can Do For Your Business.



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