



LeShop.ch optimises management of its on-line catalogue using DataStudio

●●● LeShop.ch owes part of its success to an on-line store, updated in real time with regard to inventory, partnership agreements and product developments. With a view to optimising this almost-permanent synchronisation of data with its in-house bases as well as with those outside the company, LeShop.ch chose to work with DataStudio. This easy-to-use and cost-effective solution facilitates greater responsiveness.

Founded in 1998, the LeShop.ch on-line grocery store quickly became a leader on the Swiss market. With turnover of 92.3 million Swiss francs in 2007, the company today has close to 48,000 customers, more than twice as many as in 2005. As a subsidiary of Migros and the first on-line supermarket in Switzerland, LeShop.ch owes part of this success to a highly effective information system, adapted to the specific requirements of on-line sales.

Updating critical data

This information system is made up of two major parts: the Back Office, which contains all the business applications and product information, customer, supplier, and other databases; and the Front Office, the part that is seen by customers – in other words, the website itself. Very quickly, LeShop.ch invested in hi-tech solutions to develop their website. Given that in 1998, the tools to develop on-line shops were still fairly immature, the company had to dedicate a lot of time to developing the interfaces to handle the synchronisation of data between its shop and its databases. *“Integration was fairly complex,”* remembers Pierre Vassal, Project Manager at LeShop.ch. *“Things were pretty tense. We had all kinds of problems with synchronising and the smallest change in programs for integrating data between the site and our bases required enormous re-developing.”*

Data synchronisation is critical for LeShop.ch. The company manages over 8,000 references whose characteristics change regularly: price, availability, promotions, product features (colour, size, etc.) must all be updated regularly if customers are to have access to reliable information. *“This is essential in ensuring a quality service. If the customer orders a product that is no longer available or for which the price has changed, it’s clear that they won’t be happy and that we will lose them as a customer.”*

Pierre Vassal,
Project Manager
LeShop.ch



“We have gained in responsiveness and cost-effectiveness, and now have an overall view of the flows that are critical for our business. Thanks to DataStudio, we are now reassured.”

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Industrialising and making data synchronisation reliable

In order to put an end to specific developments, improve responsiveness and limit the costs of modifying data synchronisation interfaces, LeShop.ch decided to use an ETL tool in 2005. "Several reasons incited us to choose DataStudio," explains the project manager, "especially performance. DataStudio in fact puts the data base engine to work. As a result, we have been able to capitalise on our existing system, for example, by using procedures that we had already developed and relying on the strength of our base for moving ahead very quickly, without any cost overruns. In addition, DataStudio has its own language, but it is mainly based on the SQL functions of the database. Because of this, developers are quickly at ease with the tool and can continue to work in a standard, tried and tested language, SQL." Becoming familiar with the tool was so quick, in fact, that it only took two weeks for the company to modify its customised developments. Currently, over 2 gigabytes of data transit via DataStudio per day. They are divided among three main interfaces: updates every 20 minutes between the Back Office and the website; data synchronisation between the Back Office and partners of the company, who deliver to customers every hour; and finally daily data updates between the company and Migros, the parent company.

Automated critical management processes

This first stage already enabled LeShop.ch to improve performance significantly.

For Pierre Vassal, the running of data updating programs is twice as fast as before. But the advantages of DataStudio go much further: "We now have a centralised console for monitoring and administering all processing whereas before we had to manage as many error messages as there were on-going flows. This is obviously reassuring. And, especially, we can go much faster than with our specific developments. We no longer have to reinvent the wheel each time that we modify an interface. And, finally, DataStudio makes it possible to generate reporting based on Crystal Reports with no additional licensing costs. In practical terms, it is a highly efficient, cost-effective and reliable solution... what more can you ask for?"

Given the benefits already observed, the company decided to further explore the possibilities of DataStudio. Today, the company is working on designing an EDIFACT interface, which should allow it to manage, on a daily basis, the integration of its data with that of its suppliers (purchase orders, delivery slips and invoices). All exchanges will take place directly between DataStudio and the Migros SAP XI module (EDIFACT interface). This process is critical because the data is then integrated into the accounting system which bars any further modification. DataStudio allows for manipulating any file format in SQL with a homogeneous approach that gives an overall view of the flows, thereby optimising the reliability of the processing.



A LeShop.ch user

The solution

In less than two weeks, LeShop.ch replaced its specific developments with flows managed with the DataStudio ETL tool for integrating, sharing and controlling data. This makeover has allowed it to:

- Capitalise on existing skills and developments since DataStudio provides for using the database engine and SQL language;
- Reduce development and maintenance costs thanks to the few instructions necessary for producing a specific process and quality technical support;
- Have an overall view of its flows as DataStudio provides for homogeneity of data from heterogeneous systems;
- Improve performance since data updates are twice as fast as before;
- Facilitate the deployment with integrated version management tools

About LeShop.ch

Founded in 1909, LeShop.ch is a subsidiary of Migros, a conglomerate of Swiss companies operating in the supermarket distribution sector. During the first half of 2008, this first on-line supermarket in Switzerland once again turned in record results with an increase in turnover of 11.7 million Swiss francs and had sold over 56.4 million Swiss francs worth of foodstuffs. In early June 2008, LeShop.ch was the first retail dealer in the world to introduce a "green" account for its customers. The first results as well as feedback from customers and experts alike clearly demonstrate that the green

account corresponds to customers' increasing awareness of the ecological impact of their actions. In 2008, LeShop.ch celebrated its tenth anniversary and extended its delivery zones. In April 2008, to commemorate its tenth anniversary, it launched an on-line radio station, LeShop.fm, and published a cookbook entitled "Génération LeShop".



www.leshop.ch