

Benchmarking back-office performance

LINK Interchange Network chooses EFD DataNavigator[®] and EFD Open Enterprise[™] DataDistributor to manage back-office data and increase efficiency

Each transaction handled by an EFT switch contains valuable data that needs to be captured in the back office for settlement, exception management and reporting purposes.

Getting transaction data from the front-end processing systems to back-office analysis and reporting systems can be an expensive and time-consuming task. Similarly, having a single consolidated real-time view of back-office transaction data can be a struggle. If both of these challenges can be managed effectively, a financial institution has a distinct advantage in being able to obtain a timely and accurate view of all the transactions going through the system and, consequently, being able to offer better standards of customer service.

VocaLink is the UK's national ATM reciprocity network, connecting 55,000 ATMs and driving around 2.5 billion transactions per year, with a well-earned reputation for service and technical excellence. Over a period of time, VocaLink had evolved its own back-office systems. However, with aggressive plans for future growth, both in its traditional market and in new sectors, the organization was keen to move to a more advanced solution offering new features and greater flexibility. EFD DataNavigator[®] was an obvious choice with respect to the back-office application; the question was how to transfer the very high volume of transactions—cost-effectively and securely—from the front-end switch to the back-office database.

VocaLink decided to answer this question by working with EFD on a proof of concept using DataNavigator and DataDistributor running at 'real

world' transaction volumes. DataNavigator is a proven solution used by banks around the world for transaction analysis and reporting, settlement and exception management. Open Enterprise[™] DataDistributor is a newer product with a growing customer base, which ensures that transaction data is distributed to and from multiple end-points, eliminating the need for alternative messaging middleware solutions (which are typically costly to implement and run). VocaLink plans to use the products for settlement on the VocaLink Card Scheme.

The proof of concept

The proof of concept took place outside of VocaLink's production environment, running DataNavigator on Windows[®] servers from HP, and using an MS SQL Server database.

DataDistributor was set up to deliver transactions from completed log files on a HP NonStop[®] platform to DataNavigator on the Windows platform at a rate equivalent to that expected in production.

The test results were excellent, showing that DataDistributor was moving transaction records to the back-office platform at a rate of between 500 and 600 per second, a speed constrained only by the speed of the communications links from the front-end platform. DataNavigator, meanwhile, was loading transactions from DataDistributor's intermediate database tables on the back-office

platform, processing them and loading them into its own transaction database at a sustained rate of 270-280 transactions per second. DataNavigator was constrained only by the processing power available to it in the proof of concept Windows environment.

It should be remembered that DataNavigator is designed as a “near real-time” system, maintaining its database a matter of seconds or a few minutes at most behind the real-time switch. The transaction workload on an EFT switch fluctuates, and DataNavigator will catch up with the real-time position as the real-time transaction rate drops down. The lag between the front-end switch and the back-end DataNavigator database is simply a function of the system resources made available (and hence an economic decision for the user). Higher DataNavigator transaction loading rates can be obtained simply by adding further Windows servers and reconfiguring the software accordingly. In the proof of concept DataDistributor's CPU usage increased in a linear manner as transaction rates increased. DataDistributor was also shown to be highly efficient in its CPU usage on the front-end EFT platform, consuming less than one per cent of the available resources to deliver data at the peak transaction rates to the back-office platform.

Transaction research easy to use

The transaction inquiry capabilities of DataNavigator produced very positive feedback from VocaLink's internal back-office specialists. They were impressed with the ease of use and the ability to search rapidly and effectively for specific transaction data.

Overall, the trial was deemed to be extremely successful and to have achieved its objectives. David Chance, business solutions manager for EFD in Europe, commented, “In the modern back office, scalability and performance are essential to running an efficient business. Organizations such as VocaLink are already handling very large transaction volumes and anticipate further growth; it is imperative that they can move transactions from front-end to back-end systems seamlessly and get real business insights from the data they collect through the switch. EFD's ability to combine components from its solutions portfolio will continue to provide the optimum platform for such large-scale operations.”

This was echoed by Chris Reilly, senior project manager at VocaLink, who said, “We were delighted with the results of the proof of concept, showing that the EFD products can make a significant difference as we continually strive to implement best-in-class solutions to manage our back-office activities as efficiently as possible.”

For more information about EFD Solutions, please call 1 888 936 8637 or visit our website at www.eFunds.com.

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