



## EBMS AND CONNX SOLUTIONS CASE STUDY



EBMS is a third-party administrator of employee group health plans. Established in 1980 to help employers manage their health benefit programs more efficiently and deliver better service to plan members, EBMS provides services to more than 100,000 people across a wide range of industries. Services are delivered via more than 300 professionals with offices in Billings, MT, Denver, CO and Portland, OR.

### Industry

Healthcare Management Services

### HQ

Billings, Montana

### Solutions

DataSync

### Benefits

- ◆ Fast to Implement
- ◆ Easy to Use
- ◆ Versatile
- ◆ Scalable
- ◆ Minimizes Project Risk



### Health Plan Administrator Data Needs

Database architecture may change over time, but the underlying need rarely does: to access key information in support of effective decision making. When reporting is part of what you deliver to your clients, the faster and less resource intensive you make it, the better. For group health plan benefits administrator EBMS, the ability to run and distribute reports both internally and to customers is paramount to its success. By using CONNX solutions at multiple access points in its information infrastructure, EBMS can make better use of data from its core business system more

quickly and more effectively than it ever imagined.

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- Dale Welzenbach | Lead Systems Administrator at EBMS

## DataSync

- ◆ The DataSync solution delivers better reporting, productivity, and visibility for EBMS—and its clients—than anyone ever thought possible.
- ◆ DataSync reduced end-of-month reporting by over 50%; it now takes less than 2 days to load data and generate approximately 8,000 reports for all of EBMS' clients.
- ◆ DataSync builds a range of single-function databases that draw from GBAS, based on unique user needs. "It's a powerful business intelligence and analytics solution, and we couldn't be happier."

## The Story

In early 1998 EBMS was working to replace its claims management platform, which was not Y2K compliant. EBMS purchased GBAS (Group Benefits Administration System) from SBPA Systems, a leading developer of automated healthcare benefits claims and administration software (now owned by SunGard, the largest privately held software and Services Company in the US).

Shortly after GBAS was rolled out, Don Johnson, EBMS' Senior Business Systems Analyst, identified some shortcomings in the new system's reporting capabilities. It had a limited range of stock reports that took an excessive amount of time to complete. The company needed more robust reporting capabilities that could extract and deliver timely information to other groups across the organization, namely Sales and Operations. Cognos Impromptu was selected for the task. Enter CONNX for the first time, providing the ODBC driver that connected the Impromptu reporting engine to GBAS.

By the end of 1998, it was clear that Impromptu was simply not fast enough for EBMS' reporting needs, especially for its more complicated queries. In an attempt to speed things up, the IT team tried using Microsoft® Access to run queries and reports, using another CONNX driver to link to GBAS. What happened next was nothing short of astonishing: EBMS was able to generate the same reports with Access as it was previously doing on Impromptu, only 10 times faster. That meant that more up-to-date information could be put in management's hands quicker and more often. Dale Welzenbach, lead systems administrator at EBMS Said, "We were blown away by how much faster things got with the combined CONNX-Microsoft reporting" and, "With one stroke, we were able to reduce reporting turnaround by more than 50%, which led to greater demand for reporting across the organization."

## Data Warehousing

In 2005, an enterprise architect on the EBMS IT team began developing a data warehouse using CONNX drivers and a Microsoft SQL Server to pull and stage data from GBAS. Microsoft Reporting Services were also enabled. It was hoped that this new architecture would deliver yet another improvement on speed and performance. It accomplished just that and more, reducing month-end reporting cycles from a cumbersome 2 weeks to just 4 days.

In 2009 the EBMS IT team began working on building an Operational Data Store in a SQL environment. SQL Server Integration Services (SSIS) and a CONNX driver were used to synchronize data from GBAS, but the sheer volume of data would take more than 12 hours to synchronize. Systems analysts and developers loved being able to go right to the new Data Store to get data on-demand, instead of trying to connect directly to GBAS. As more users logged on, the workload of the SSIS connection – already slow and unreliable – increased significantly, placing more strain on the system. EBMS needed a more scalable and reliable data access solution.

After a great deal of shopping around and testing various database connectivity solutions, the IT team settled on the CONNX DataSync solution. CONNX was a known and trusted vendor that had already contributed to significant improvements in EBMS' reporting needs, so the decision to go with them again was an easy one. With the help of the CONNX support team, EBMS installed DataSync within a week and, to their delight, has never had cause to look back.

"We saw what CONNX did for us when we switched from Impromptu to Access, and then from Access to SQL, so we were very confident in their capabilities this time as well," notes Geordy Kerscher, Lead Data Analyst with EBMS.

## The Results

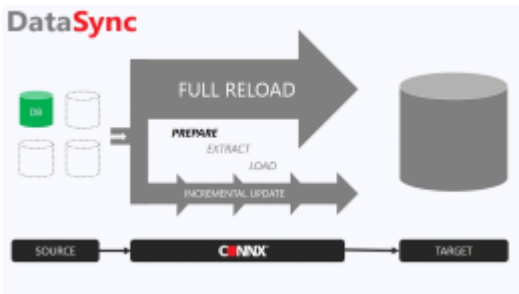
The current DataSync solution delivers better reporting productivity and visibility for EBMS – and its clients – than anyone ever thought possible. Adding DataSync has reduced end-of-month reporting by an additional 50%; it now takes less than 2 days to load data and generate approximately 8,000 reports for all of EBMS' clients. "The increase in speed with which we can run our reports has yielded tremendous benefits everywhere in the company," adds Dale. "Not only can we provide key operational information in a timely, relevant manner, but we have opened up the doors to anyone who needs anything out of GBAS. Our ad-hoc reporting takes less effort and can be turned around more quickly, without any impact on the speed and stability of our core system. We have also been able to build a range of single-function databases that draw from GBAS, based on unique user needs. It's a powerful business intelligence and analytics solution, and we couldn't be happier."

With two CONNX solutions in place, EBMS has the option to connect directly to GBAS or to the SQL data store. The architecture is stable and maintenance-free. Daily refreshes take less than 90 minutes and some hourly data synchronizations take less than 5 minutes, with no impact on core system performance.

"We are deeply dependent on CONNX to keep the information flowing," Dale acknowledges. "Even the Sales team knows it. In fact, they use our reporting capabilities as a big differentiator when pitching new clients. Whether we're talking about the software or the company itself, there are only good things to say about CONNX. The products are set-and-forget. Technical support, if needed, is always highly accessible and dependable, with most issues getting resolved on a single phone call. Every organization **thinks their database architecture is unique, and they're probably right. Regardless, I place complete trust in CONNX to make it work, with next to no initial or ongoing effort.**"

## About DataSync

DataSync is an ETL / data synchronization solution ideal for maintaining large enterprise data warehouses and operational data stores. DataSync allows data to be moved quickly and easily from any source to any target destination, regardless of platform or file structure. Its intuitive user interface and powerful scheduling function simplifies complete or incremental data synchronization, keeping target databases up to date with minimal effort, impact and latency.



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### About CONNX

CONNX Solutions is a leader in data access, migration, integration, virtualization, and replication. Their solutions enable quick, secure, and scalable SQL access to legacy, non-relational, relational, and cloud data wherever it resides, however it is structured, without any change to your core systems. CONNX is quick and easy to set up and use and offers easy standards-based tools that are accessible, flexible, and scalable.

Since 2001, CONNX solutions have been installed in more than 3,200 organizations worldwide and across a range of industries including government, manufacturing, education, technology, human resources, financial services, and telecommunications. CONNX's solutions unleash the power and value of information, providing organizations the ability to make confident, evidence-based business decisions.

Learn more: [www.connx.com](http://www.connx.com)

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