

Case Study:

How Precisely Built a New Organization Based on Trusted Data

Overview

"We build possibilities grounded in data." That is Precisely's purpose and reason for being. As the global leader in the data integrity software market, Precisely has helped thousands of customers trust that their data has maximum accuracy, consistency, and context by integrating siloed data, ensuring it is of high quality, extracting insights through location intelligence, and enriching it with third-party datasets. With the Precisely Data Integrity Suite, businesses can make more confident decisions and build possibilities grounded in data.

Precisely was born from the acquisition of the Pitney Bowes Software and Data business by Syncsort in December 2019, an acquisition that doubled the size of the company. As a result of the acquisition, the Precisely IT team was faced with a familiar challenge – integrating data from the two companies and making it available to the lines of business for smarter, faster decisions with trusted data.

Under the leadership of Chief Data and Information Officer Amy O'Connor, the Precisely IT team had to manage the needs of several line of business stakeholders, including Sales, Marketing, Legal, Support, Fulfillment, Professional Services, Finance, Tax, Analytics, and more. Each line of business had its own challenges and timelines required to maintain operational continuity through the integration of the two organizations. Furthermore, each stakeholder had different data requirements in overlapping systems. For example, the CRM system alone had over 2,940 fields that were populated, and then replicated back to the data warehouse – each field with its own definition of acceptable values for things like pick lists.

Business and Technical Challenges

As part of the acquisition of the Software and Data business, the Precisely IT team received data from the business, but not access to its systems of record. The team's goals were to incorporate data into appropriate systems of record for Sales, Finance, Operations, and Marketing as well as to ensure that the business has a complete picture of its 12,000 customers and the financial and operational data needed to serve those customers.

The team had ten months to complete the data migration process, which was planned in three phases: identify all data in Software and Data systems that needed to be migrated; design a strategy and process for data extraction, engineering, and migration; and migrate the data to new systems.

Technology used

- Precisely Connect
- Precisely Trillium
- Precisely Spectrum Quality
- Precisely Spectrum Context

Results and Benefits:

- Successfully migrated 228 datasets identified across 8 lines of business in 9 months
- Improved data quality by 98%
- Used location intelligence to get a complete view of the data, leveraging the persistent PreciselyID to help track and organize data
- Implemented data standardization processes to ensure data consistency moving forward

They needed to pull together data from varied source systems. Additionally, they had 228 data migration requests identified across 8 workstreams: CRM, Finance, Legal, Procurement, Marketing, HR, Support, and Sales Enablement.

The primary technical challenge faced by the IT team was the lack of standardization across datasets. Account and contact information was incomplete, inaccurate, or incompatible with their new target systems. It was a challenge at scale, so the Precisely team needed scalable solutions to address data quality and data integration.

"We needed to refine and enrich the data to reflect the real world. The company we acquired had also acquired other companies, but had not built a strong data practice to ensure data quality and accuracy.

In our account master data, there were 600,000 accounts with 1.2 million contacts. All those data elements within those accounts and contacts had standardization elements. It was a challenge at scale."

- Dave Shuman, Senior Director of Operations and Enterprise Architecture, Precisely

Solution

To address these challenges, the Precisely IT team prioritized the integration of customer account data and the implementation of data quality process using a three-prong approach to data standardization.

Standardization of countries. The IT team first worked toward a bulk fit, determining how they could use tools to bring addresses to a common, deliverable format. Their standard was - 'Could we mail this contact a postcard?' Can we identify where on the planet this address belongs?

And once they applied a country, they then had to fit that within the country-specific standards to achieve address standardization. They applied that method across all 1.5 million addresses, including "bill to," "ship to," "installed at" addresses, and their associated contacts.

Standardization of addresses. The Precisely IT team used the company's Spectrum OnDemand standardization engine on all data that was ingested before it was integrated with the new CRM. They also used the Spectrum Data Quality Connector for Salesforce to ensure ongoing operational consistency moving forward.

Standardization of names. Every system of record had minimum requirements, and no two systems were configured the same way. For example, SAP did not maintain multiple addresses for accounts. Therefore, every address was its own account in the data. Because those accounts were replicated into Salesforce, the replication problem spread to other systems. Users were required to create a record for each account. The replication of accounts was spread to other systems that SAP integrated with, causing a widespread data duplication issue.

For example, one customer, a national bank, had 10,789 accounts (two for every physical location globally). The IT Team used Precisely Trillium and Precisely Spectrum Quality products to standardize account names and look for relationships between datasets. The graph analytics within Spectrum Context Graph were used to identify potential compaction of accounts as well as the relationship between datasets. The result was a 98% improvement in data quality – going from over 10K accounts to under 260 accounts for this customer. The IT team then created a data dictionary to standardize names of accounts.

The goal of the data project was to ensure that Precisely had a full financial representation of its customers and accounts. While the IT team sought to consolidate and deduplicate accounts, they also had to guard against 'over compaction.'

The Precisely team set several goals around metrics and used these questions to measure their data integrity:

- Have we created a digital twin?
- Do our cyber systems represent the physical world?
- Have we established "one VAT to one customer"?
- Can Professional Services and Customer Support engage with their customers without confusion?
- Did we migrate all records that represent financial or fiduciary responsibilities?

"Josh Rogers, our CEO, has a saying - sunlight is the best disinfectant. From my perspective, it wasn't enough to just take the step of merging datasets and then cleaning the data to make it more consistent and accurate. The goal was much larger in scope.

Precisely is the result of the merger of two companies and cultures, and each area of the business had different approaches. In order to really instill a data culture, and foster a 'one company, one team' mindset, I felt it was as critical to provide consistent data, as to develop an agreed-upon set of processes across the business.

That consistency has led to an elevated customer experience. Whether you're a customer in Boston or Brisbane, when you interact with Precisely, you can count on the same level of customer experience."

- Amy O'Connor, Chief Data and Information Officer, Precisely

Building a data culture. Once the data was integrated into a data lake and cleansed, the IT team searched for solutions to help the lines of business get a single view of their customers to foster deeper insights and make smarter business decisions. Precisely's enterprise architecture consisted of a sales and service cloud that fed an enterprise resource planning solution, which interfaced with myriad solutions like tax management, banking, procurement, financial planning and budgeting, and commission and human capital management. To achieve the goal of fostering a data-driven culture that uses data to make its decisions, the IT team relied on business intelligence and analytics dashboard solutions to provide real-time analytics based on data with maximum accuracy, consistency, and context. Now every department, from Accounting and Finance, to Sales and Marketing, can rely on trusted data from multiple data sources to automate and standardize their reporting – leading to a smarter, more efficient way to work.

Building trusted data is an iterative process that requires IT teams to build scalable data pipelines, adhere to data standards, and commit themselves to continuous process improvement. Precisely Spectrum Quality and Precisely Trillium help the IT team in their data integrity journey.