

Case Study:

Sky Realizes Real-Time, Error-Free Data Replication with Precisely

Overview

Transformation is nothing new to Sky New Zealand. For over 30 years, the company has invested in new technology to deliver more choice and a better viewing experience to its customers. Starting as a satellite pay TV provider, Sky later added streaming entertainment and sports services and, more recently, broadband internet service.

Behind the scenes, Sky is also in transformation mode — digital transformation, that is. The company is modernizing its approach to information technology, consolidating toolsets across the enterprise and moving functions like data analytics to the cloud. The company selected Snowflake for its new data warehouse but faced a challenge: how to get data ready for analysis and into the Snowflake in the cloud.

Business challenge

Like many companies, Sky's ability to derive business insights from its data was hampered by silos. Business systems such as billing, subscriber management, financial management, and the chart of accounts all run on the IBM i platform and Db2, and each has its own file structure. Consumption data from set-top boxes and the streaming platform were in their own silos as well.

Over the years, Sky had developed bespoke extract, transform, and load (ETL) tools to bridge the silos, but they were inflexible, slow to run — typically from four to ten hours — and prone to error if there were any network issues. If anyone wanted to look at different data sets, IT would have to rebuild the ETL tool, a slow and painful process. With the move to Snowflake and the cloud, the company needed an entirely new way to move data.

"We needed a tool that would not only take the data out of the IBM i systems and push it into Snowflake but also, if possible, do that in near real time without us having to build anything," said Quintin McKenzie, Head of Corporate Core at Sky New Zealand. Other challenges further complicated the effort, including the short timeframe for implementing a solution and the complexity of working with a high-availability architecture.

Client

Sky Network Television Limited

Sky.co.nz

- New Zealand broadcasting company that offers satellite pay TV with 70+ channels, sports and entertainment streaming services, and broadband internet service.
- Has more than 990,000 customers and 990 employees
- Was first to bring an all-digital and high-definition experience to New Zealanders

Technology

- IBM i
- Snowflake
- Amazon Simple Storage Service (S3)
- Precisely Connect with Change Data Capture (CDC)
- SAS IT services

"We soon determined that Connect was doing exactly what it said on the box. It was working as designed."

— Quintin McKenzie, Head of Corporate Core at Sky New Zealand

Solution

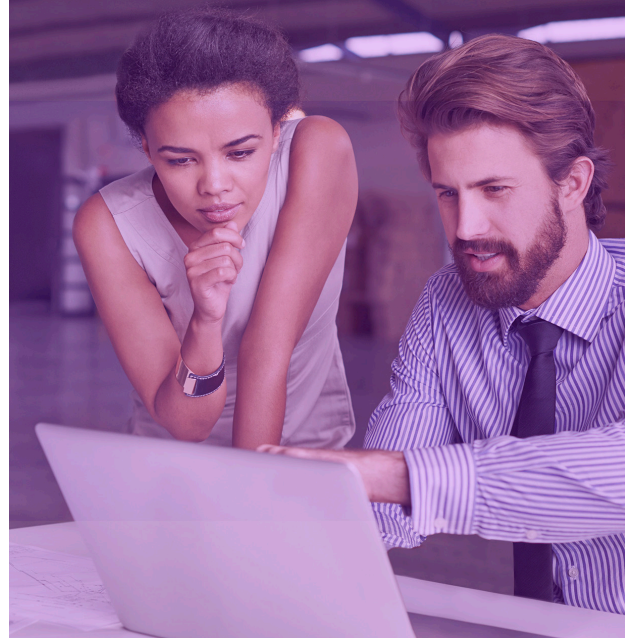
After researching different products and reaching out for a recommendation from its long-term technology services partner, SAS IT, Sky selected Precisely Connect with Change Data Capture (CDC) to transfer its legacy data to Snowflake and stage their data in Amazon Simple Storage Service (S3). Precisely's data integration solution, Connect addresses all of Sky's requirements: near real-time data flows, no programming (just configuration), and in the event of disruption, no data loss.

Installation and configuration of a proof of concept took two weeks. After a month, Sky was in full production, extracting data from about 1,000 tables and replicating out to Snowflake in real time, as transactions were recorded in the Db2 tables. When the company experienced disruptions, Connect picked up right where it left off when access was restored, without losing any data.

Benefits

With Connect, the benefits began accruing almost immediately. The sales organization has a view into data that is only a few hours old — the time it takes to consolidate and format the data in Snowflake, run reports and feed them to the business dashboards and visualization tools.

With Connect's fast, flexible and easy configuration replacing hours of heavy development time, IT is able to focus on higher value contributions to the business. Moreover, with the Connect solution for transferring data directly to Snowflake, Sky is advancing its digital transformation and modernization efforts. It can take advantage of the cloud and advanced analytics while keeping its core business systems unchanged on the reliable IBM i platform.



“Connect opens up the whole database to us. If we add any new tables, then it's easy to add them to the extraction process and replications.”

– Quintin McKenzie, Head of Corporate Core at Sky New Zealand