IBM

# *Argus revives data warehouse with DB2, improves customer service.*

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| **Application** | Business Intelligence: data warehouse for pharmacy reporting |
| **Business Benefits** | Reporting cycle 60% shorter; improved customer service; significant improvement in IT productivity |
| **Software** | IBM DB2® Universal Database™ Enterprise-Extended Edition<br>IBM CICS® |
| **Hardware** | IBM RS/6000® SP™<br>IBM S/390® |

There's a heightened sense of urgency in the healthcare industry to gather meaningful information that can help managed-care organizations find the delicate balance between the quality and the cost of healthcare. What are the trends in drug usage? Is there is a regional variance in prescription and diagnostics behavior? Seeking answers to many questions like these, healthcare organizations are relying on business intelligence solutions to help gather and analyze market data.

A major source of these solutions is Argus Health Systems. Providing third-party transaction processing of pharmacy insurance claims for a large number of managed care organizations, Argus has not only the experience, but now, also the technology it needs to meet its customers' needs. Argus' newly revived information warehouse, based on IBM DB2 Universal Database Enterprise-Extended Edition, consolidates data captured from its pharmacy point-of-service (POS) network that connects more than 60,000 pharmacies across the United States.



*Argus' DB2-based information warehouse consolidates data from over 60,000 pharmacies.*

Argus today processes more than 160 million claims a year for about 24 million insured people. Thus, Argus needs more than a powerful solution and not just for its POS network — it needs a way to make sense of the enormous volumes of data it collects. In the past, Argus used a reporting warehouse that was constructed with a legacy database. However, performance constraints led the company to switch to DB2. The difference has been remarkable, as a result of IBM's focus on scalability and consistent performance, and DB2 has become the corporate standard at Argus.

The conversion to DB2 resulted in a dramatic improvement in performance. The over 300-gigabyte DB2 reporting warehouse resides on a five-node RS/6000 SP server and is refreshed frequently by data imported from the POS system, constructed using IBM S/390 and IBM CICS. In the near future, the data warehouse will be populated in near realtime. With almost 3,000 pre-defined, monthly, quarterly and annual management reports being generated from the data warehouse, performance is of paramount concern for the Argus Information Systems team. DB2 was selected to address inconsistent run times and lack of timely support.

The impact of this unpredictable performance on reporting schedules was significant. Argus was constantly in a fix-it mode, resulting in lost personnel time that was dedicated to addressing issues that should never have occurred. In addition, delays in providing output to customers could result in performance penalties and unsatisfactory customer service. With DB2 as the repository, the reporting cycle, which lasted as long as 15 days with the legacy database, is now down to 3 days. Additionally, the Argus IS staff is no longer required to baby-sit the system on a regular basis.

Given its experience with poor performance, Argus Health Systems conducted extensive testing before selecting a new database. After rigorous testing, DB2 emerged the clear leader. DB2 was five times faster than the legacy database in one test and also executed 200 reports 35 percent faster, according to Argus statistics. During an earlier pilot to revamp the company's POS system, DB2 delivered a response time of 25 milliseconds, which was unmatched for performance and reliability by any of the other databases tested.

## A partner in action

As one of the early sites deploying DB2 Universal Database, Argus benefited from close interaction with IBM's development teams in Toronto. After the reporting warehouse was successfully deployed on DB2 Universal Database and SP, Argus rapidly migrated systems using RedBrick databases onto these platforms as well. The company is currently Web-enabling its applications utilizing DB2 and the IBM WebSphere™ suite of products to provide a cost-effective solution for new and existing products.

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