

SDR helps BG Energy solve remote site update problems

When you are operating internationally, keeping remote sites up to date with the essential information held on your IT systems can be a major problem. Geographic remoteness and poor communication links can both have a severe impact on the accuracy of the data these sites have to work with.

The BG Group is a leading player in the global energy market, with operations in some 25 countries over five continents. They have a proud history in all aspects of the energy sector, particularly natural gas, with experience across the entire gas chain - from exploration through to delivery to the consumer.

Operating in four key business sectors - exploration and production, liquefied natural gas, transmission & distribution and power, they focus on understanding, building and supplying natural gas markets around the world.

BG Group has been operating in Trinidad and Tobago since 1989 and is now a major gas player in the country. They currently supply gas to the domestic market and to Atlantic LNG primarily for export to North America. Headquartered on the island of Trinidad with 2 offshore rigs, this part of the Caribbean is one of BG Group's core asset areas.

Response problems

Globally, BG Group use IBM Maximo in conjunction with an Oracle database to manage their assets, including production equipment, facilities and transportation assets, in alignment with business objectives. In the Caribbean this involved having the main database on a server at the Trinidad office and the offshore platforms communicating with this server via a VSAT satellite link.

With this setup, one of the platforms was experiencing difficulties due to high VSAT latency leading to poor response times, and consequently was not able to use Maximo to its full potential. In early 2007 IBM Professional Services recommended SRO to Bill Paton, BG Group CMMS Project Manager, to help them resolve this problem.

We were able to help by utilising our SRO Data Replicator (SDR).

Robust replication solution

SDR enables disconnected remote sites such as regional offices, vessels and off-shore platforms to have reliable access to up to date information. Available for use over lower bandwidth dial-up connections it is fully optimised for Inmarsat Fleet and various VSAT protocols.

It delivers an application independent, dependable and robust 'session' based replication solution. SDR replicates not only data but also file attachments and Web pages, enabling the easy management of remote location systems and laptops centrally from the office.

Some of the many features include:-

- Bi-directional replication
- Data compression
- Data slicing and fragmentation - provides only the data a site needs, minimising network traffic
- Dynamic bandwidth management to automatically manage network balancing
- Collision avoidance methodology to manage collisions without system downtime
- Heterogeneous database support (Oracle, MS SQL, Sybase)
- Advanced scheduling
- Security and encryption
- Easy movement of data between sites and installations
- Powerful management and reporting tools
- Database disaster recovery

SDR provides an alternative and better replication method for remote database systems and enables organisations to take advantage of the latest technology, features and functionality offered by the Maximo system.

Tight timescales

Paul Taylor of SRO explains how we set about solving BG's problem:

“When we were first commissioned, we initially designed the replication rules based on discussions we had with the BG staff in Trinidad. We carried out this process in the UK, firstly to speed up the entire project but also to reduce the amount of time (and consequently expense) we would need to be based on site.

When the replication rules had been finalised we then flew over to Trinidad to carry out the implementation and training. This involved setting up the 2 servers (platform and head office) exactly as they would be when they were in location. BG staff were then able to helicopter the rig server out to its final location and basically plug it in.

Finally we showed the BG staff how to carry out the necessary maintenance tasks and log checking”.

Latency problems eradicated

With SDR now successfully replicating the Maximo data in the background to the rig, all the previous performance problems brought about by the VSAT latency have been eradicated

Commenting on the overall success of the project, Bill Paton, BG Group CMMS Project Manager said:

“The work was completed extremely professionally, within the allocated eight day time period and the SRO staff were an integral part of our team and worked extremely long hours including weekends”.

He continued: “I feel that Paul and Gary's efforts and the team blending by these guys contributed greatly to the success of the project. They were intuitive, dedicated and committed to the successful completion of the project and I would certainly wish for them both to be on my team again at anytime”.

The outcome of the work undertaken has led to further enquiries from other BG business units also suffering from poor connectivity and looking to improve their use of Maximo and other applications.



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