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COSCON: SAP® Technologies Help Create a Unified Enterprise Data Platform for Global Operations

Executive overview

Company

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Benefits

Company
COSCON Container Lines Co. Ltd.

Industry
Transportation and logistics

Products and Services
Integrated container shipping services

Web Site
www.coscon.com

SAP® Solutions and Services
SAP® Sybase® Adaptive Server® Enterprise, SAP Sybase IQ server, SAP Sybase Replication Server®, SAP Sybase PowerDesigner® software, and professional services from SAP

When COSCON Container Lines Co. Ltd. set its sights on implementing a standardized data center system to **ensure consistent and accurate data** and support decision making and management of its global operations, the company selected SAP® technologies as the foundation on which to build its systems. The company deployed its database and data warehousing based on SAP solutions and greatly increased the efficiency and value of its business intelligence for its worldwide business.

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Operating shipping routes around the globe

COSCON Container Lines Co. Ltd. is the COSCO Group's flagship company for container transportation. COSCON currently owns over 140 container vessels totaling over 520,000 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units – a unit based on the volume of a 20-foot-long intermodal container), and it operates 21 domestic routes and 80 international shipping routes connecting over 155 principal ports in 53 countries and regions across the world.

140

Container vessels in corporate fleet

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Perfecting the needs of a growing business

400

Sales and service points worldwide

COSCON has woven a huge global container service network consisting of more than 400 sales and service points. In China alone, the company has an immense service web comprising around 300 sales and service points. Outside China, COSCON operates a transportation network throughout Europe, America, Asia, Africa, and Australia and provides seamless, comprehensive, world-class service to customers regardless of weather or circumstance.

COSCON set specific goals for its data center development. The goal was to standardize the data center system to ensure consistent and accurate data, as well as create a centralized processing and storage management system that would integrate and consolidate all information assets. The company also wanted to build a centralized analysis system that would provide decision-making support for both local and provincial companies.

For the last decade, COSCON has been perfecting its information systems to meet the needs of its growing business. The systems the company developed in-house for container shipment management, data warehousing, and e-business provide effective information-based services to clients as well as real-time and accurate data to support the decision making of senior managers. Using SAP Sybase® Adaptive Server® Enterprise (SAP Sybase ASE), SAP Sybase Replication Server®, and SAP Sybase PowerDesigner® software in these systems, COSCON has chosen SAP technologies to play an important role in helping develop its information infrastructure.

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The right technology to manage a growing data warehouse

COSCON selected SAP Sybase ASE and SAP Sybase Replication Server to perform data collection, storage, conversion, processing, and analysis duties for its container shipment management system. This system is supported by a data center packed with 50 UNIX servers and more than 100 Microsoft Windows NT servers. The system is growing fast, and data volumes have already passed the 20 terabyte mark. Most of that data is stored and managed by an SAP Sybase ASE database.

Recognizing the performance and stability of SAP Sybase Replication Server, COSCON has deployed a variety of replication technologies and solutions to implement real-time data replication and data sharing in this complex IT environment. Other technologies and solutions include replication between two SAP Sybase ASE databases, cascade replication of three SAP Sybase ASE databases, cascade replication between the container shipment management system and the management information system, remote replication, and replication between SAP Sybase ASE and Oracle databases.

20

Terabytes of data volume and growing

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Optimizing data management

In order to accommodate international logistics development and provide high-performance and value-added information services to clients, COSCON deployed its own container shipment management program at its worldwide sales and service points. The system is a centralized e-business platform connecting systems in disparate geographical locations and allows global data sharing. This system gives COSCON a clearer understanding of transportation routes and optimizes container shipment management, providing clients with consistently fast and efficient global transportation services.

Using its container shipment management system to standardize daily operating practices and related business rules, COSCON can centrally control and manage information stored around the world. Based on a unified data structure and centralized management model, the system has removed geographical barriers and enables global data sharing. It provides a robust foundation to help the COSCO Group to improve customer service, expand its markets, and implement an e-business messaging service.

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Data warehouse system for information management

While the company's container shipment management system is a fundamental business operations system, it was not designed to provide decision-making support. Accordingly, COSCON created its own management information system (MIS). The MIS performs data mining and data processing according to the needs of senior management. It makes use of information stored in the container shipment management system, SAP solutions, and other information systems to boost management's decision-making power. After analyzing its existing implementation, as well as mapping out all the information needed for sound business management, COSCON came up with a framework and requirements for its MIS.

The requirements included the following. The firm's headquarters have to be able to perform overall business indicator analysis and departmental performance evaluations. In addition, headquarters would need to provide statistical analysis tools for business departments to generate, forecast, and monitor business data about container capacity, sales, clients, costs, supplier management, revenues, financial management, and container facilities management. The regional overseas branches need the ability to perform business indicator analysis and evaluation, as well as use statistical analysis tools to generate, forecast, and monitor key business data. The port offices must be able to perform business indicator analysis and evaluation, quality control of port operations (monitoring and controlling documentation), process specification, and services quality. In addition, the offices have to use statistical analysis tools to generate key business data.

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Supporting the KPI system, e-business, and efficient reporting

The management information system also had to address other requirements, including the need for an integrated system for tracking, measuring, and evaluating key performance indicators (KPIs). The KPIs provide different users with vital information for managing the business, including data about operation differences, process specification, appraisal of clients and suppliers, fleet capacity, schedules, shipping space, and market share.

The firm also needed to support its e-business activities. In this respect, it needed to support development of e-business by providing statistical analysis of transactions between COSCON and its clients in areas such as business history, quantities, and value. In addition, COSCON wanted a standardized format for its statistical reports in order to make it easier for internal staff to write up reports, and for management and third parties to read them.

After careful consideration and evaluation of a number of solutions, COSCON selected SAP Sybase IQ server and implemented its MIS data warehousing project with the help of the professional services team from SAP.

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Accurate business information now available worldwide

Some of the key benefits that SAP technologies have brought COSCON include:

- Distribution of information worldwide
- Provision of instant access to accurate and comprehensive business information
- Connection of COSCON systems in disparate geographical locations
- Improvement of information control at sales and service points across the world
- Improvement of customer service with faster response times

In addition, COSCON achieved the following benefits from the development of its management information system:

- A unified enterprise data–sharing platform with rapid circulation and integration of information, making good use of existing operational data to carry out analysis, monitoring, and evaluation of business activities
- Extraction of high-value information buried in enterprise databases, providing complete, timely, and accurate business management information for COSCON in order to support wise decision making, enhance operational quality, and improve competitiveness
- Better-informed decisions based on predictive ability and multidimensional analysis power provided by better business analysis and modeling tools

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