



“Sybase’s EMap enables us to expand our business by adding new clients and opening up markets for clients much faster than we could before. We meet very tight deadlines and run maps in minutes where before it took hours. EMap is reliable and flexible.”

—Tom Maley, EDI development manager,
Energy Services Group L.L.C.

Sybase and Energy Services Group

foundation

- Overview:** Electric and natural gas producers, marketers and pipeline companies rely on Energy Services Group L.L.C. (ESG) for cost-effective outsourcing solutions to their mid- and back-office needs. ESG provides contract administration, gas control and scheduling, joint interest billing, revenue distribution, and operational and financial accounting. Deregulation has brought and continues to bring increasing numbers of clients to ESG, which counts on Sybase technology to help process transactions quickly.
- Business Challenge:** Transaction processing requires a mapping function to translate variations in file formats. Prior to 2001, ESG’s mapping process consisted of either writing custom code for each individual client or using a mapping function that was painstakingly slow. ESG sought a mapping tool that provided:
 - The speed required to process ESG’s work load effectively
 - Ease of development so ESG could create new maps rapidly and enjoy the flexibility of adding new business on short notice
- Industry:** Utilities
- Business Solution:** Support for EDI and other service bureau transactions via ingoing/outgoing message translation
- Architecture:** Windows NT network
- Product Used:** Sybase® EMap
- Development:** ESG in-house team
- Benefit:** ESG reduced file-processing times from hours to minutes when it chose EMap to provide its mapping technology. EMap provides very high processing speeds, as well as fast and easy development capabilities. As a result, ESG saves time and increases productivity by creating effective maps on short notice that run quickly and allow for the processing of multiple concurrent tasks. EMap is consistent and reliable, and it can process a number of file formats, including EDI and XML—a strong performer, EMap increases efficiencies at ESG. Because ESG can count on EMap’s speed and flexibility, the company can expand its business with new clients, new markets and even international ventures.

ESG Leverages Rapid Transaction Processing Capabilities from Sybase

Formed in November 1997, Energy Services Group L.L.C. (ESG) outsources electric and natural gas scheduling, accounting and administrative needs to energy suppliers. ESG offers an expert, professional team focused on maximizing the profitability and efficiency of mid- and back-office functions throughout the electric and gas industry.

ESG acts as a service bureau that handles transactions for energy generation companies and energy distribution companies. With clients in Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas and other states, ESG uses technology to quickly process transactions for the hundreds of customers belonging to each client.

Deregulation Creates Extensive Administration Needs

In 1997 deregulation dictated a split between energy suppliers and energy distributors, leaving generating plants without the technology to process data going to distributors. An added complexity was the newly legislated ability to generate energy in one state and sell it in any number of other states. The result was a need to exchange vast stores of transactional data with distribution companies on a regular basis.

Although electronic data interchange (EDI) facilitates exchanges using an agreed-upon standard, in practice each state’s standards and each company’s formats might be slightly different. As a service bureau, ESG’s task is to interpret the format received and translate the data into usable customer information for distribution.

“Clients dealing in different states often send us information in various formats. They might use their own flat-file format, the flat-file format we designed or an EDI format,” said Tom Maley, EDI development manager, ESG. “We handle certification so our clients can trade in different states—and we also handle their transaction processing so they can communicate billing and other information to energy distributors and customers.”

ESG Looks for Speed, Ease of Development in a Mapping Function

Given high volumes and varying formats, service bureaus require programs that quickly translate incoming data into a consistent readable format. This translation phase is also called mapping.

“Our company originally processed everything by writing maps in PerlScript. This was very intensive and extremely time-consuming—we were writing custom code for each individual client,” said Maley. “To streamline the process, we brought in an NT-based product from Extol. Although the product performed a mapping function—not without some difficulties—performance-wise it was awful.”

It took the Extol product three to four hours to process a good-sized file, which was unacceptable. ESG serviced 20 to 30 energy companies at a time with hundreds of customers each. In search of high processing speeds and quick and easy map development, the company decided to evaluate other mapping products.

“A file from a client or a client’s trading partner might contain 50 to 60 thousand transactions, which must be processed quickly because 10 other clients could be running at the same time. We looked at several products and when we tested EMap, our processing time went from hours down to minutes,” Maley stated. “We chose EMap to perform our mapping function because of its rapid processing capability. We also chose it because it let us develop maps for new clients and markets very quickly.”

The New Mapping Solution Provides Flexibility and Agility in the Market

EMap manages information by translating EDI and other data formats back and forth among transaction protocols. ESG started using EMap in January 2001, and since then has saved time in both processing and development. The product’s flexibility and reliability mean ESG can increase business volume with confidence.

“The maps run very quickly, much faster than those developed in PearlScript or the Extol product, and we can process large files and transactions independently of the current task,” said Maley. “I think EMap does a good job, and Sybase support has been helpful too.”

EMap also benefits ESG when it comes to developing maps. Some clients planning to enter new markets need maps almost immediately, and ESG saves time by leveraging EMap’s rapid development capabilities.

“EMap lets us develop maps very quickly, sometimes in a matter of hours. Although rapid turnaround is not always required, being able to respond quickly is to our benefit,” Maley stated. “A client might tell us at the last minute that they want to get into a market, and we have to be able to react right away to have the maps done in time.”

When creating a more sophisticated, complex map from scratch, any of the mapping staff can use EMap to complete the task within days. The staff is comfortable using EMap and it able to turn out large numbers of maps efficiently. Given total man-hours, ESG is increasing staff productivity.

EMap’s speed and flexibility facilitate easy handling of impromptu requests so ESG can accommodate increased volume without turning business away. EMap allows ESG to expand its business by adding new clients and new client markets.

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“ECMap gives us a lot of flexibility. A client might need us to expedite development of all maps for the Texas market, and rather than taking months to develop them in PearlScript, we now finish large jobs like that in less than a month depending on the maps and implementation guide,” Maley commented. “Sometimes a client has to send in transactions in a particular way and wants assistance developing a new format from basic data. With ECMap, we have the flexibility to do that.”

ESG also uses ECMap to quickly correct problems. According to Maley, “If there’s a problem, we go into the map and in an hour or so the situation is resolved. ECMap does a good job helping us service our clients.”

ESG Plans to Expand into International Markets

As markets continue to deregulate, ESG is ready to expand into the emerging space. ECMap helps by fitting smoothly into ESG operations. “ECMap’s is very reliable. Once a map is developed and we have it running properly, I’ve never seen a problem where it isn’t working as it should,” said Maley.

ESG plans on extending its services internationally. In addition, the company anticipates increased use of extensible markup language (XML), a relatively new format in the industry.

“We’re getting into some international work, and it’s likely we’ll be dealing more with XML,” said Maley. “Right now we have only a few clients using XML, but we’ll have more in the future. ECMap has the capability to translate XML, so we anticipate a smooth transition as we learn the ins and out of XML.”

Conclusion

ECMap provides ESG with increased flexibility and responsiveness for servicing clients on tight deadlines. By taking advantage of both the extremely fast processing capabilities and rapid map development built into ECMap, ESG can effectively service today’s expanding energy markets. “We needed to be able to process thousands of transactions quickly, and ECMap handles our mapping well,” said Maley.

For more information about Sybase products, please contact **1-800-8SYBASE** or visit **www.sybase.com**



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