Clutha District's Award-Winning Digital Transformation, including MFSQL and M-FILES

"MFSQL Connector is the best tool that you could use for the shortest space of time to do the most amount of manipulation of the metadata possible."

- Neil de Jong

BUSINESS ANALYST
CLUTHA DISTRICT OF NEW ZEALAND

Products Used:	Industry:
M-Files®	Local Government
MFSQL Connector	

OVERVIEW:

Local governments are often stereotyped as possessing little to no technical knowledge and running on antiquated, disorganized systems. In the Clutha District of New Zealand, that could not be farther from the truth. Using M-Files and MFSQL Connector, Clutha has created an organized, modern, seamlessly integrated document management system that will serve its needs for years to come.

Clutha, in southeast New Zealand, encompasses nearly 20,000 people. The population is largely rural, but there are several small cities in the district, including Balclutha, with a population of around 4,000. Sixteen years ago, Clutha began a journey of digital transformation to bring it into the modern age.

CLUTHA BEGINS A DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION WITH M-FILES

After several years of other technological improvements, Schalk Breytenbach, Clutha's ICT manager, turned his attention to the district's old document management system. Clutha needed a modern document management system that could manage both internal and public-facing components.

Four years ago, Breytenbach found out about DocSmart, the first New Zealand company to achieve M-Files Premier Reseller status and requested a demo of M-Files. "About five minutes into the demo," he says, "we looked at each other like, 'Yes! This is what we were looking for all along!'"

Although he and his team were excited about M-Files,

they were also worried about integrating the document management system with their existing systems; Breytenbach had heard of integrations of other document management systems that dragged on for months, costing tens of thousands of dollars. Thankfully, the DocSmart and M-Files professionals guided Clutha through a quick, smooth, and relatively inexpensive transition. What's more, to date, Clutha has not experienced any loss of information from their previous system to M-Files. "We're really ecstatic about M-Files as a solution and the power of it," Breytenbach exclaims.

A SEAMLESS ERP AND CRM INTERGRATION

As part of their digital transformation, Clutha also installed a new ERP and CRM system. They have fully integrated M-Files with these systems, creating automated workflows and streamlining data organization. "You've got the right systems of ownership on the data, but the end user doesn't see these segregations," Breytenbach says. "It is all seamlessly integrated. That's our vision, and that's why we went with M-Files."

MFSQL CONNECTOR: THE LAST PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

Neil de Jong, Clutha's business analyst, worried that he could only customize M-Files through C#, a very high-level programming language. Thankfully, through the partnership between DocSmart and Laminin, de Jong found out about MFSQL Connector developed by Laminin Solutions. MFSQL allows developers to customize M-Files through SQL, a very common programming language, instead of C#. De Jong already knew SQL, and he knew that training someone on MFSQL Connector would take mere hours compared to the weeks it would take if they used C#.

"MFSQL was a no-brainer for us," de Jong explains, "because we were moving big chunks of data around. I didn't have to go out and learn a whole scripting language. MFSQL says, 'well, I'll take your existing skills, and away you go!' You are now able to look after this metadata just using SQL. And that's where Laminin steps into a really big hole in the market. And that's where we really started achieving things."

FOUR WAYS MFSQL CONNECTOR ENHANCES CLUTHA'S M-FILES SYSTEM

Le Roux Cilliers, founder of Laminin Solutions, helped Clutha set up its M-Files solution. "The service I've gotten from Le Roux has been absolutely phenomenal," de Jong says. Without MFSQL Connector, de Jong "couldn't do half the stuff that is required."

Once Cilliers helped de Jong and his team install MFSQL Connector, they hit the ground running. De Jong has maximized the value Clutha gets out of MFSQL by using it in a myriad of ways around the district. In the first place, he uses MFSQL for data warehousing, enabling business intelligence and analytics within the M-Files system.

Secondly, de Jong uses MFSQL Connector for an "extract, transform, load" process, combining data from multiple sources into a single system. Clutha uses this process to collect data from contractors working across the district, clean that data, and store it within M-Files. De Jong tells the story of a contractor who came in from another district "and her first comment was, 'I can't believe how clean your data is.' You can't pay for that sort of stuff!"

MFSQL Connector also is used to maintain the metadata on all the objects within the district's system. Clutha's M-Files system holds over two million objects, so metadata is vital to the organization and sustainability of the system. Through MFSQL, de Jong can easily correct errors, export data, and build data into workflows across the district. As a government organization, Clutha must destroy certain files at particular times. MFSQL identifies and triggers certain timed deletions.

Lastly, de Jong also uses MFSQL Connector for creating ad-hoc reports of the district's data in M-Files. He says that this capability is the most important for him; it allows him to create custom reports of any data in M-Files through a few simple steps in SQL.

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4 MFSQL Connector Uses

1. Simplify data warehousing for analytics
2. Combine data from multiple sources
3. Clean and maintain metadata
4. Ad-hoc reporting using SQL

A SUCCESSFUL TRANSFORMATION

After years of painstaking work, the Clutha council is being recognized for these transformative efforts. Clutha has received national and international recognition and awards for its digitization projects. Part of that success is due to their extensive implementation of M-Files and MFSQL Connector, which have given Clutha a modern, efficient, customizable document management system.

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