



Surviving an IT Conversion:
The Data Integration Platform Approach

Staying in business during a system conversion: The Safe house Approach

How do you avoid disrupting insurance business processes when moving to a new application platform or IT infrastructure? This innovative strategy can dramatically reduce the risk of downtime and breakage. And speed up the whole migration. It's all in how you handle your data.

For IT teams who are planning to move their claims or policy processes to a new system -- or migrate operations to a new IT infrastructure -- the nightmare scenario usually involves breaking a must-have business process during the cutover.

Making a system 'unavailable' for a few hours over a weekend is one thing, but putting claims or policy system out of commission for days at a time or inadvertently snarling thousands of transactions is too costly to contemplate. The company's bottom line *and* image can suffer.

In most insurance organizations, the riskiest part of an IT conversion is in delicately unplugging all the myriad data leads and feeds from the old platform, then carefully re-connecting them all to the new system. (A process that some IT teams liken to ‘defusing a bomb’.) Aside from the issues involved in getting data into the system, there is also the worry about somehow affecting a downstream process in another system.

The other concern is the data itself. The existing data can’t typically be ported directly to the new system as is; some sort of conversion is usually required to make the data acceptable to the new platform. What’s more, to avoid bringing all the old non-conformities in the old data to the new system, experienced IT teams often use the opportunity to cleanse the legacy data -- to help avoid glitches and corruptions.

Well aware of these risks, IT teams have developed all sorts of ad hoc tactics and workarounds for managing a conversion, with varying degrees of success.

But by taking a somewhat different approach to the data issues, it’s possible to bypass the riskiest parts of a cutover entirely, dramatically simplifying the cutover, and greatly reducing the chances of disrupting a core process.

Conversion Vs. Migration	Single Function Conversion	Data Integration Platform
New processing system functions	✓	✓
Leads / Feeds from other systems	Partial	✓
Outputs for other reporting functions		✓
Support for future technology initiatives		✓
Positioned for warehousing and business intelligence		✓

Integrate, rather than migrate

Here’s the idea. Instead of trying to work with ‘live’ feeds and leads during a migration, the existing legacy data from the existing system, as well as interconnected systems, can be pulled into a central data repository -- a ‘safe house’ as it were. So rather than having

each system maintain its own data, everything works from a fully integrated, and common data source.

This offers a number of immediate advantages. For one, it means all your data and system connectors are continually integrated and tested for full performance -- before transitioning to the new system. At the same time, the data can be easily cleansed and converted (without disrupting ongoing processes) -- a task that must be performed anyway.

Second it means that launching the new claims or policy system doesn't involve unplugging and re-plugging a network of data feeds. All that remains is the far simpler process of linking the new application or infrastructure to your central data repository.

Cost?

Interestingly, the costs involved in *integrating* the data into a central platform are comparable to what typically required for a data conversion alone, since the process can be handled far more efficiently on a specialized integration platform.

But even more important, moving to centralized data to ease an IT cutover opens up additional opportunities down the road, both in future migrations, and in developing more effective intelligence and reporting capabilities.

Data Migration Variables	Migration/Conversion	Integration Platform
Time expended	Substantial	Substantial
Cost – dollars and productivity	High	High
Risk to your business	High	Reduced
Business disruption	Significant/problematic	Minimal
User experience	Disrupted	Sustained
Critical business operations – during migration	Disrupted	Sustained
Business impact post-migration	Hampered	Enhanced
Downstream reporting (management and statistical)	Disrupted	Sustained
Utility of existing content post-migration	Not fully leveraged, limited	Highly re-usable

The clean and conformed data is not the same old data that was just moved from one place to the other. Now you will be able to use this data to run accurate forecasts and predictions that will help you make better business decisions on how to win and keep your customers for the long term.

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