James Coons (James.Coons@yahoo.com)
Thomson IP Management (now Clarivate Analytics)
Business Analyst
https://clarivate.com

A Case Study of ProSpec, a Data Conversion System

Introduction

This Case Study is based on an analysis made by James Coons (Business Analyst, Data Conversion Specialist), comparing the legacy system with the replacement Data Conversion process at Thomson IP Management (formerly ***Master Data Center***) from April 1995 to October 2004.

Challenges of As-Is Process	Benefits of New Process ("ProSpec")
Used antiquated technology to perform ETL Data Conversions (DOS word processor, COBOL and DOS).	A modernized system ("***ProSpec***") was written in MS Access to perform Data Conversions.
Translation Tables were provided in DOS word processor to manually convert. Programmers had to start from scratch and create the COBOL tables each time they were modified.	Translation Tables were improved using ***ProSpec*** so they were entered only one time, which was available to the conversion program with no manual coding necessary.
ETL Specifications were hand-created in a DOS word processor and were inconsistent. No standards or templates were used, so the Specification format might be different for every conversion.	***ProSpec*** provided a consistent technical specification to the client. By producing the Specification directly from the ETL Specification, there was a consistent look-and-feel to the report that did not change from conversion to conversion. Details could easily be updated within ***ProSpec*** to produce an updated Specification.
There was a bottleneck to create an ETL Specification because only the Project Manager could write a Specification. Programmers had to wait in line for other projects to be worked on before being able to begin their own projects.	***ProSpec*** allowed any Programmer to create an ETL Specification without waiting for the Project Manager, thereby eliminating the bottleneck. The Programmers now had only to wait for the Project Manager to review and approve the Specification before programming it.
Data came in various formats, so each conversion could be radically different from others being processed.	***ProSpec*** provided a simple, standardized method of importing data from any format. In addition, we required clients to provide data to us in a limited number of file formats, to reduce the need for manual conversions. Also, ***ProSpec*** could convert a delimited file directly into an Access table by clicking a single button.
Programmers spent a lot of time manually typing in a program.	***ProSpec*** had the "amazing" feature of being able to generate a complete conversion program directly from the Specification. This saved Programmers a lot of time, as it was simple to generate a single line and import it into the conversion program.
ETL Programs could sometimes take weeks or months to program, test, validate and review, in addition to various iterations to produce a final data conversion.	***ProSpec*** gave Programmers more efficient methods of doing a data conversion, thereby saving a lot of time. In one study, a conversion that would have taken 2 months was accomplished in 2 weeks, with a savings of $3,000.

SUMMARY: I was able to improve the Data Conversion process during my time at Thomson. I could see ProSpec being used every day by myself and others to produce more efficient data conversions.