

Eviciti Corporation Solves File Transfer Problems with PKZIP for iSeries

Eviciti is a highly creative, professional services partner that helps companies understand and integrate the Internet into their core business. Resourceful and accessible, Eviciti combines consulting and strategic planning, with design and creative technologies and back-end support to provide a seamless and complete integration of eBusiness services. Eviciti has established a strong presence within the manufacturing, distribution, retail, insurance, government and finance sectors.

It is imperative that each of Eviciti's eBusiness clients provide their customers with timely and efficient access to data. Real-time access is vital because the information on their Web sites may include time-sensitive data related to inventory, pricing, accounts or billing. To ensure the accessed data is as current as possible, the database is regularly updated on a frequent, preset schedule. However, several of Eviciti's business customers were experiencing unacceptably long transfer times when updating their back-end databases.

When the update files are extremely large, the FTP process can take anywhere from four to ten hours, depending on the size of the files. Such a transfer rate is completely unacceptable when the data must be updated every hour. Since the back-end databases provide the necessary data to front-end B2B Web sites, the inability to update data in a timely manner prevented the business customers from achieving vital real-time functionality for their end users. Eviciti needed a way to make the process faster.

Eviciti approached the problem from a logical, process-based point of view. The volume of data that must be transferred would not decrease. Actually, over time it would only increase. Likewise, the demands for hourly updates for the end user could not be altered and might even increase as well. Eviciti had to find a way to move the data faster from point A to point B. And the solution had to be fast, simple and cost effective.

While the bulk of data could be moved faster with higher-speed lines, faster computers or alternative transfer options, each of these solutions was unfeasible because of its relatively high costs. In addition, with any of these options the data would still take more than an hour to transfer.

"In order to make things go faster, we needed to find a way to make the files smaller," said Helene Kaufman, Senior Systems Engineer and iSeries Technical Solutions Expert for Eviciti. Kaufman was drawing from previous knowledge of data compression utilities

and their ability to significantly reduce data-transfer times. Kaufman added, "This is when I started researching the Internet for compression functions for the iSeries."

During her research, Kaufman found PKZIP for iSeries. She asked for a demonstration copy for the customers' production iSeries and Eviciti's own development system. Within 10 minutes of receiving the trial software, Kaufman had PKZIP installed on her iSeries and was ready to test.

PKZIP is distributed as a 30-day free trial. After installation, the user possesses a fully functional version of PKZIP to test and evaluate. Complete directions are provided in both printed and electronic format to make the process of installation as simple as possible. However, if problems arise, PKZIP is fully supported by systems and support analysts trained to solve problems specifically related to PKZIP installation and operation.

Once PKZIP was installed on the Eviciti iSeries machine, Kaufman could then test the product by transferring binary data via FTP within a development environment. According to Kaufman, "With the testing, we found that we could transmit the files zipped by PKZIP in less than 10 minutes."

If data files could be transferred and updated within 10 minutes, then the B2B Web site could be updated with time to spare. With this news, Kaufman was able to approach the customer with a solution that exceeded the stated requirements. Once Eviciti conducted additional testing on the customer's iSeries, the next step was to incorporate PKZIP into the production environment. The simplest and most cost effective way to approach the transfer process was to utilize PKZIP's flexibility by integrating it as a pre-transfer compression utility in an automated transfer process. With the assistance of the customer, Eviciti was able to completely automate the update process in an extremely short amount of time.

By utilizing PKZIP directly on the iSeries and integrating it within an automated FTP process, Eviciti was able to provide the customer with a complete solution. Prior to compression, test data files were in excess of 168 MB in size. With PKZIP the files were compressed to 29 MB—an 84% compression rate. Now, Eviciti's customers can deliver real-time information to their business partners. Eviciti's customers are extremely happy with the built-in high-speed functions that Eviciti and PKZIP have provided in addition to the other benefits of PKZIP data compression.

Eviciti's customers also benefit from PKZIP's ability to check the accuracy of data after it has been transferred. PKZIP uses a Cyclic Redundancy Check (CRC), which verifies that the contents of a ZIP archive are correct. When PKZIP compresses a file on any platform, it calculates, based on the contents, an eight-digit hexadecimal alphanumeric value that is stored with that compressed file. When PKZIP extracts the file, it recalculates the CRC and compares it to the original, stored CRC. If there is any difference, PKZIP will recognize that the data has been modified or corrupted and will report the situation.

Another benefit of using data compression is the ability to place multiple files within a single archive. When data files are compressed, an archive is automatically created. This archive is like a folder that can hold multiple individual files. PKZIP iSeries allows Eviciti's customers to send one ZIP file in place of multiple single-file transfers. Fewer files mean faster transfer times. In Eviciti's scenario, this equates to an 84% faster transfer.

Eviciti decided to purchase PKZIP because of the product's ease of installation, setup and use. PKZIP operates directly within the OS/400 environment. The compression values made it possible to send information with greater frequency, and the flexibility of the product allowed Eviciti to completely automate the FTP process.

"Because PKZIP is integrated within an automated process, a technician does not need to sit and wait for the FTP to finish. If we had to pay someone to monitor that process, it would be a large amount of money," Kaufman said. "The cost savings for the customer is well worth the purchase of the application."

"Prior to compression, test size files were in excess of 168,324,761 bytes of data. By utilizing PKZIP, the file can be compressed to 29,676,297 bytes of data achieving 84% compression."

*Helene Kaufman
Senior Systems Engineer
Eviciti*

Customer Solution on Spotlight: Eviciti

Profile:

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Needs:

- Ability to provide customers with timely and efficient access to data.
- Integration of the solution into an automated FTP process.

Solution:

- PKZIP for iSeries

Results:

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