

How to do Data Migration the Gareth Way...

Sooner or later, your going to have to put that round peg in that square hole, and noting you can do will escape that task. Perhaps it's a database upgrade, perhaps transferring your data to business partners, and perhaps upgrading your new system, with the existing data, as no matter how you view it, a system is useless without the data, which begs the question of why do people ignore this issue still?

Perhaps your stuck with a Greenfield project, and everyone goes we don't care what came before? Well your certainly going to care when you have to start updating live, with subsequent version changes, after the business comes to realised they wanted something else... which means even in the most ideal scenario your still going to be faced with some data migration issues. How to update live, without breaking it? do you try and manually keep track of scripts or automate it? and if so how.

As no matter what your project, there is bound to be some element of data migration involved, and this is going to take you through the pain free method of getting there.

B2B Communication the painless way...

Learn to speak to each other early on, and define a schema. This could be xml or a csv file, it doesn't matter. Just don't try and do it in one go, as you will end up in a mess. (it's called testing ,dumb ass!)

As even if it's your own system you will want the extra flexibility which comes with being able to import data in, from somewhere soon.

As for automated sql tasks, forget it. I prefer a hybrid approach, and oo design. While not to everyone's tastes, it tends to prove less hassle in the long run, since imports and exports tend to remain a feature of most systems, and they tend to be identical in the long run. So why reinvent the wheel? If your code works, it works, and leave it at that.

Easy to test, easy to maintain and of course easy to read, which is what you want when data is at hand...

Database Upgrades, and updating live...

Use Sql Compare to script the changes. One of the few tools I keep coming back to time and time again in my I.T. career. And most people know how i hate to recommend any others products. With this you can accurately script the changes developers have done between a UAT environment and the original live version.

Nothing gets missed, sql changes, column changes and sp changes are all accounted for. Just make sure you script it the right way! After backing it up first. I've seen instances where the script was run the wrong way, and i haste accidents happen, and worse I've seen companies where they have ignored the tools to go it alone, which is always a mistake.

The finance industry and banks are forever one of the worst offenders when it comes to avoiding tools, as the developers can script it themselves, and remember what they did.. **WRONG**, and there is no exceptions to this rule and I don't care who you are! On any large development. Columns will get missed, and i have yet to meet a team, who can remember everything, and log it as they go along.

So what happens is that these financial institutions end up wasting a fortune in trying to resolve the issues, and all because they wanted to save time avoiding the red tape

and bureaucracy of getting a tool in. which is why you usually download it for free ;) and do it anyway. Or you could write your own, perhaps.

Saving time documenting databases

An experiment once, in a bank. They wanted a database schema done, commented on. for documentation purposes. Now which was quicker to buy a tool? To write one? Or to do it by hand?

Now buying a tool, was excluded as it would take 6 months to get it through the red tape. Which left the age old dilemma is it quicker to write it? or to do it by hand. With a team of 6 developers. The task was set. They would write it by hand, while i would write a tool. We had 2 weeks. To deliver.

Truth be told. I had ignored management and decided to write the tool anyway. As there's only so many times you can be put in this position, before you have to act.

So the question was not if I could do it, but could I do it in the same timeframe? Deliver my section (or the whole document) in time. Even if they could not.

The answer was of course yes. In the same time, it took them to go through their bits of the database, i had written a tool which would document the changes manually, and more importantly could be used in the future to do it again! which is what you need.

As no one wants to waste time doing that again! which is what happens at some other date in time.

Remember it's not hard breaking a task down into component bits, as you keep it simple. as all my tools did. As I exported the sql table into an intermediary xml schema. Which had the structure of the document, while i wrote another tool which processed it, and turned it

into a pdf formatted how they wanted (reusing some of our other components, which were already designed to process documents! As why broke the mould, when your already going down that route?)

I also added tools, which of course extracted the table bits without comments, and update it. from an excel file, thus saving the pain for the bedroom, and not the office...

In the meantime - it IS called reuse

As why reinvent the wheel, when you can build up your own tool set in-house. As once your done, your set for life, and you have the ability to silence those people in head office who would never ever view the script again. As breaking it down, mitigates risk. As even the most stupid of managers, can see that a task, isn't going to take long when its presented to them, complete.

Some managers, rarely see the big picture, and that's the problem, can you evaluate when to save time? and when to go it alone?

Which is what you need, and the other issue, is always to pick up the phone and speak.

As no matter what the project, there will be a time when your speaking with third parties. And it could be in the office, between your teams, or more likely with another business. partners your supposed to be working *with*? And not against.

My system talks with yours, and the bugs at your end, so while your managers, and your developers do nothing? Nothing will get done. and yet my system and yours need to work together for us to do business together, so what's the delay, and why aren't you passing things on? Do it now!

**Pick up the phone, and make that call...
07939543057 as your business and mine depends on it.**