Managing health repayments in real-time

Almerys, a subsidiary of Orange, is a leading player in the industrial processing of digital information, particularly in the areas of health and paperless transactions. Specializing in the simplified management of health repayments, Almerys facilitates the practice of third-party payment for health professionals and supports supplementary health insurance organizations in their health strategy. 15 million people make use of Almerys’ solutions with more than 50 partners, and 156,000 healthcare professionals operating in more than 15 specialties are contracted on the Almerys third-party payment network.

Data at the heart of Almerys’ day-to-day operations

While, like most modern companies, insurance and mutual companies are increasingly considering their data as a strategic asset that should be secured, streamlined and enhanced, this is even truer for third-party payment processors and other trusted third parties. ‘Almerys’ activity is mainly based on data flow exchanges,” says Eric Moleon, Director of Applications for Almerys’ Department of Information Systems. “With more than 400,000 invoices processed each day on behalf of fifty clients (including Swiss Life, Generali, Reunica, etc.), we need computer systems that are flexible, secure and responsive. In fact, their own customers, whether individuals or health professionals, in addition to their partners - such as banks or brokers - rely on the speed of transactions that we manage."

"The third-party payment system is simply strategic for our customers and we are therefore subject to significant performance limitations,” says Eric Moleon

This strategic aspect of Almerys’ data management activities explains why the company initiated a major overhaul of its integration infrastructure in 2011. “In the past, we relied on historical data extraction and integration tools, developed internally several years ago on the basis of specific technology (AS/400). We felt not only that it was getting increasingly difficult to maintain the integration platform, but also harder to find the technical skills necessary to provide maintenance. With data volumes growing steadily, we decided to abandon AS/400 technology to adopt a more modern system, preferably one that is Java-based,” continues Eric Moleon.

Almerys’ goal was not only to modernize its integration infrastructure, but also to develop a unified and secure data flow exchange platform, based on an information system allowing the management of flows exchanged externally (with partners), but also internally between different platforms of its information system.

Why Talend?

As the company’s IT policy consisted in favoring open source solutions (both to make the information system sustainable with a total control over its developments and to improve predictability and cost control), Almerys evaluated several data integration solutions, including those offered by Talend. The company initially deployed Talend Data Integration to perform and resume batch processing. “Early on, significant real-time integration needs convinced us to adopt Talend Data Services, the only platform on the market offering the combination of a data integration solution and an ESB (Enterprise Service Bus). Thanks to its scalability, the architecture proposed by Talend guarantees both stable scalability..."
Due to the growth of our business, we could not afford to develop a system that we would outgrow in just two years," describes Eric Moleon. With more than 400,000 invoices processed daily today, and significant future prospects mainly due to participation in European projects, the performance of the platform is crucial. Almerys now manages a large volume of data flows: first, about 1,000 very large daily flows (including control and enhancement operations) are performed via batch processing or on an ad-hoc basis. On the other hand, its next generation third-party payment activity (pharmacists’ access to the rights of the insured allowing the settlement of an invoice in real-time) corresponds to more than one million transactions per day. “We developed a solution to manage these flows based on Talend technology. Our ‘ebee eXchange’ platform is highly configurable and enables us to monitor flows from start to finish. First used internally, we now sell usage, via SaaS services, to health professionals, such as mutual companies and other technical operators of health-related flows.”

"Of course, it complies with regulatory requirements and allows us, for example, to provide a geolocation service of health professionals consulted via a mobile phone. Other services, the purpose of which is to simplify the lives of our customers, are being developed, for example in the anti-fraud sector.”

Both operational and strategic benefits

Internally, the main benefit highlighted by Almerys lies in the productivity gains achieved thanks to Talend. “With a Java-based technical platform that we master internally and an easy-to-use solution facilitated by the power of graphic programming, our development cycles were accelerated by 30%. In addition, by having better visibility of our flows, we experienced 40% gains in terms of maintenance, which is particularly significant during the recovery of former developments,” says Eric Moleon. “The platform also offers higher levels of traceability, with very powerful basic tools. Not only do we save time, but we also better respond to increasingly stringent legal requirements related to the computer processing of personal and sensitive data. For example, it is now very easy to report to each patient the use of their data.”

In terms of performance, the holistic nature of the platform, meaning the close integration of features, also allows increased productivity. “All the necessary functions are at your fingertips! We save time on many operations – for example, the automatic documentation of jobs is more obvious – and we can therefore focus on the functional aspects;” adds Eric Moleon. “In production, the platform perfectly meets our performance requirements thanks to parallel processing. While all our flows are not yet based on Talend, it is clear that those which are based on Talend work much better! For instance, after the SEPA transfer switch, our bank transfers delays were divided by a factor of between 4 and 10 (depending on the volume).”

While “eBee eXchange” is used to manage flow exchanges with professionals involved in the health process, it is also used internally to feed a BI, operational and IT data warehouse. Various reports for management concern multiple performance indicators, including the time frames assumed and the total amount of refunds. “eBee eXchange” also allows to perform specific analyses on behalf of customers on demand, for example in the context of fraud detection or various statistical analyses programs.