Leonard's Express
Finds a Compatible Match in SEQUEL

Online dating or "matchmaking" services have been gaining popularity over the last few years. Millions of people sign up for these services in the hope that a successful partnership will result. But, because it's so difficult to match people who prove to be compatible over time, many have failed in this endeavor. This same type of challenge is present in the daily lives of transportation brokers. Transportation brokers match up companies that have goods to haul with qualified truckers to haul them—bringing together shippers and carriers who might not otherwise find each other, and helping to negotiate the terms of the transaction. To accomplish this successfully, brokers provide shippers, carriers, and owner-operators with a lot of administrative support.

Leonard's Express, headquartered in Farmington, New York, provides various services to those in the trucking industry. Among the services and support they provide are computer services, billing, collections, and payments. To facilitate compatible match-ups between shippers and motor carriers, Leonard's Express offers support with the latest, most efficient systems and hardware. This valuable support allows clients to improve their efficiency in accounts receivable, collections, invoicing, fuel tax reporting, and other administrative tasks.

For accessing and formatting financial and customer data, Leonard's Express has found its own successful match with SEQUEL,™ Help/Systems' business intelligence solution for the IBM® System i.™ Kyle Johnson is an IT consultant for Leonard's and feels that SEQUEL is a good fit for their company. "In only a short time of using SEQUEL, I became comfortable writing SEQUEL views and reports. We use SEQUEL to do everything from modifying standard production reports to creating quick ad hoc reports."

SEQUEL provides Leonard's Express with several powerful functions, including the Report Writer and tables. Says Kyle, "There are only a few of us that write the views, tables, and reports, but a lot of people use them. Most of the reports we write with SEQUEL are for upper management. We've used SEQUEL to combine data from six databases covering 19 companies. We can consolidate data across companies for the upper management reports. We've also used SEQUEL to do a combined aging report for all companies."

The reports function isn't just for management, however. Kyle adds, "We also put a lot of planning views and reports on menus for users to run. Our line of business systems makes use of user-specific menus. SEQUEL allows us to provide extensive run-time prompting to our users. This gives the users a lot of flexibility to see what they need. It's useful

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to let users choose a report to run, let them enter their own run-time parameters, and then e-mail the results.

"In addition to reports, we've also enjoyed the easy-to-use interface and scripts. With our Domino server on the System i, we've used SEQUEL scripts to extract data and FTP it to our Web server. We have a Web application that displays all of our available equipment on an intranet. We use SEQUEL to look at the files and determine which equipment should be listed on our Web site. We use a job scheduler to run the SEQUEL script every five minutes so that we practically have real-time data on the Web. Using this technique has reduced our response time on the site from minutes to seconds."

Leonard's Express has found SEQUEL to be very handy for doing date manipulation. Kyle explains, "With SEQUEL, we can easily convert our numeric date fields to date data types and then calculate the number of days between two dates. We store our dates as numeric fields—century, year, and then three digits for the day. We can easily convert that Julian date into any date format we want and then do date arithmetic on it. Sometimes we've used SEQUEL to drop that data directly into Excel.

"We've also combined SEQUEL with ESEND™ [the file distribution software] to e-mail consolidated accounts receivable reports as Excel spreadsheets to management on a weekly basis. SEQUEL

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> — Kyle Johnson, IT Consultant

retrieves the data, creates the columns of the spreadsheet, formats the data into Excel, and works with ESEND to mail the Excel file, automatically and all in one step. This has really helped make things more efficient."

From their many requests for shipping and receiving services, Leonard's Express moves 400-500 loads per week and generates that many invoices. In addition, they have specific reports that calculate a broker's pay. Says Kyle, "SEQUEL's ability to do sophisticated calculations and conditional processing lets us do the broker settlement statements very easily. We generate a detailed statement for each broker every week. The statement shows all the shipment detail and does all the payment calculations for us."

Of the many successful business relationships Leonard's Express has initiated in the transportation industry, one of the most compatible has been its own relationship with SEQUEL—a relationship that continues to assist Leonard's in bringing shippers and receivers together and supporting their needs: a relationship that can endure for the long haul. Kyle summarizes SEQUEL's appeal. "For us, the biggest advantages of SEQUEL are how easy it is to use and how quickly we can get data and reports in a sensible format. Getting System i transaction data to the PC in a meaningful format has been effortless. I haven't found anything we couldn't do with SEQUEL. It's been a great solution for us."