Leading Energy Trader - London, UK

Sharing real-time brokerage data between networked Excel users

The Problem Definition

Analysts at a London-based energy brokerage use Excel to perform real-time modeling on market data from various sources. Recently they were faced with the challenge of collecting the results of this market analysis and making it available to more people in the company, so that they could fully utilize the information it contained.

"We had a lot of information flying around the office which needed to be assimilated and made readily available for the benefit of everyone," said the company's IT Manager, who was assigned the task of finding a solution. He realized that what they needed to do was link all the Excel spreadsheets through a real-time database, so that each user had access to the results being generated by everyone else, in addition to the market data they were currently reading.
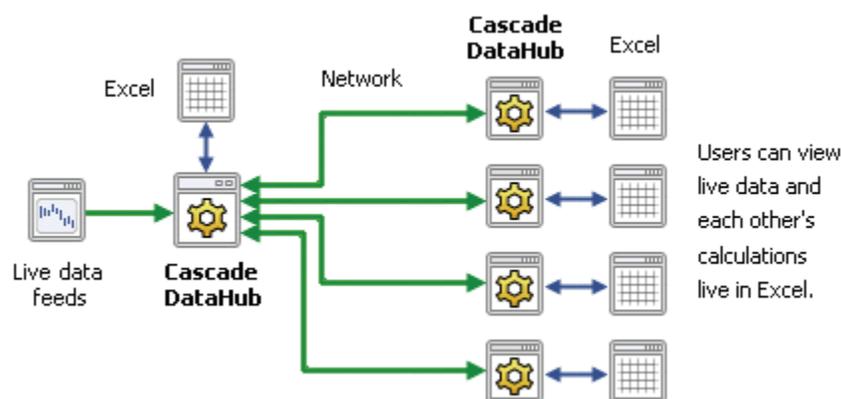
The ideal solution would mean:

- No disruptive changes in software for the users, they continue to work with Excel as before.
- Instantaneous delivery of live market data and Excel results to everyone on the network.
- Minimal hardware requirements.

The Solution

With these requirements in mind, the IT Manager searched the Internet and found the Cascade DataHub. "The Cascade DataHub is a simple concept which leads to a simple implementation," he said. "We are using it to move a large amount of data around with no impact on the end users, but with a massive benefit for people needing this data readily available."

The manager first installed the Cascade DataHub on the server computer and connected it to the Excel application that was reading market data from the various sources. Then he installed the DataHub on each of the end users' computers and configured them to connect back to the DataHub running on the central server. Connecting these DataHubs meant that the data on the central server was now mirrored across the network to each of the end users' computers. It was then a simple task to configure the end users' Excel applications to read and write data to the local DataHub. The end result is that any data change generated by the spreadsheets is mirrored across the network to the central DataHub, where it is instantly mirrored back out to all the other Excel applications.

"In our initial testing we have been running the system with multiple users all making regular changes to live price analysis and algorithms," said a company spokesman. "We have set up numerical arrays which in turn pass this data to the Cascade DataHub for assimilation and distribution throughout the office."

"The next step is to extend the reach of the data to more positions, and provide more data content," he continued. "Then we are looking at storing the historical data for retrospective analysis."

The Cascade DataHub is well suited to this forward-looking vision. It scales well—the number of simultaneous connections, data volume, and throughput speed are limited only by available system resources. For connectivity, the Cascade DataHub functions equally well across a LAN, WAN, or the Internet. And for archiving data, the Cascade DataHub offers connectivity to any ODBC-compliant database, such as Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, MySQL, DB2, Sybase, Foxpro, and many more.

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The Cascade DataHub is a highly optimized middleware tool for distributing real-time data between networked applications. It provides quick, reliable and secure access to data generated by Microsoft Excel or other Windows and Linux based applications. The Cascade DataHub can make this data available to management systems, database archives, and remote clients. Combining a number of innovative technologies, the Cascade DataHub makes it easy for you to access the real-time data you need to make informed and timely decisions that save time, build confidence, and increase profitability.

Founded in 1995, Cogent Real-Time Systems is the leader in real-time data integration between Windows, Linux and QNX systems. Customers include the Bank of Canada, Cadbury Chocolate and the European Space Agency. Cogent leverages its experience in real-time data communications to provide the next generation of real-time middleware products. For more information, please contact Cogent at info@cogent.ca or visit our web site at www.cogent.ca. You can also call us at +1 (905) 702 7851.