SEQUEL Provides a Complete Data Access Solution for Crete Carrier Corporation

When you admire a Rembrandt painting, do you pay attention to the quality of the canvas or to the individual paints that were used? Probably not. More likely, you are affected by the painting's beauty as a whole. The true value of a work of art, a successful company, or a usable software product, isn't defined only by its separate components. Instead, the individual parts come together to produce something greater.

Crete Carrier Corporation, headquartered in Lincoln, Nebraska, is one of the largest privately held truckload carriers in the United States. It wouldn't be what it is today without the union of several specialists: Crete Carrier,

Hunt Transportation of Omaha, Nebraska, and Shaffer Trucking of New Kingstown, Pennsylvania. The individual companies were successful for many years on their own, but by forming a unified force, they've been able to serve more clients with a variety of services—dry van service, food and temperature-sensitive shipments, flatbed trucks, long haul fleets, and other specialized transportation services.

Today, the Crete Carrier Corporation family not only provides a multitude of services and support to its customers, but also provides data processing support to each of its contributing companies. To accomplish this, they rely on SEQUEL,™ Help/Systems' business intelligence solution for the IBM® System i.™

Ron Edwards, Chief Information Officer at Crete, says, "The data processing support for all Crete companies is done out of our location in Lincoln. Our application software is from Innovative Computing. Because SEQUEL is so powerful, and faster than writing a program, we can do a lot more with it. Between 50 and 75 users either run SEQUEL views and reports directly, or have System i jobs that use SEQUEL. We have all the SEQUEL modules, including the Tabler, Report Writer, ViewPoint,™ and the SEQUEL Web Interface.™"

The systems at Crete Carrier Corporation must process a lot of data efficiently, both from drivers and from customers. SEQUEL allows users to create views in an easy-to-use interface and display only the information they need. "One of the first things I did with SEQUEL was to build a centralized repository of data that we can compare with the data in our imaging system. SEQUEL goes out to the databases of our trucking companies and pulls the data into one file. We just scan the paperwork that drivers generate for a trip—bills of lading, freight bills, and so on. The view we build using SEQUEL allows us to compare the actual data in the file with the data on the scanned images."

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>
> *– Ron Edwards, Chief Information Officer*

Crete users can send their view results to the Web or to users via e-mail. The SEQUEL Web Interface allows them to display objects in a browser; the SEQUEL output commands work with their e-mail program to send reports without printing or mailing. Says Ron, "I use SEQUEL to build a Weekly Operational statistics report, which is a snapshot of various aspects of our company's business, all on one page. It has three columns of data for the prior year and two for the current year for comparison. The rows include such items as revenue, revenue per mile, active and inactive tractors, drivers, and so on. SEQUEL consolidates all of this information and the Report Writer formats it all on a single page. I have SEQUEL set up to automatically retrieve the detail data, summarize and

format it, and e-mail the report to key people in the company on a weekly basis."

SEQUEL also simplifies date conversion and comparison operations at Crete, resulting in time savings for everyone. "We do quite a bit of date manipulation with SEQUEL," continues Ron, "which allows us to convert to or from any date format. In our software, dates are stored in a Julian format: the year followed by a three-digit day. With SEQUEL, we can convert to any readable calendar date format while also using SEQUEL to do date arithmetic— to calculate the number of days between two dates. It gives us a lot of flexibility for aging routines in our reports."

Another way SEQUEL saves time is with its run-time prompting. This allows Crete to prompt users for specific information while running reports. Ron explains, "SEQUEL's run-time prompting is really nice and we use it a lot. It lets us use SEQUEL in our CL programs, making the CL more powerful. SEQUEL does the file handling and data manipulation. With SEQUEL, it's easy to pass parameters and declared CL variables into any part of the SEQUEL view definition."

Adds Ron, "One of the best things about the product is the customer support. When we're stumped, we can call Help/Systems customer support, even with something really complex, and they always get back to us fast with a solution. It's nice dealing with support people who know the product so well. We can explain things to them easily and they quickly determine what we need to do."

As Crete Carrier Corporation has discovered, SEQUEL brings together superior functionality, a usable interface, and helpful support in a powerful System i data access and analysis tool. Alone, each of its features enable users to perform tasks efficiently; as a package, the components of SEQUEL work together to create a complete business intelligence solution for Crete Carrier Corporation and its users.

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