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## PRODUCT REVIEW

## DataDirect XML Converters 4.0

### DataDirect XML Converters Allow Health Care Payers and Providers to Comply with X12 EDI Standards

**REVIEWER:** Don Taylor, Benefitfocus CTO and Jack Lunn, Benefitfocus director of engineering, Automation

**BACKGROUND:** Benefitfocus is the largest health care benefits software provider, serving 270,773 employers, 410 insurance carriers and 52 million consumers. Our technology solutions reduce costs, expand market share, manage risk and improve consumer satisfaction. Benefitfocus gives a competitive edge to carriers, employers and brokers as they help consumers manage complex decisions in an ever-changing health care environment.

**PLATFORMS:** Windows 2003 Server, Microsoft BizTalk Server 2006 R2 and the Microsoft .NET Framework.

**PROBLEM SOLVED:** Benefitfocus internal tools operate on data in XML format. When integrating with our carrier partners, we often receive their data in ANSI X12 834 format, which is non-XML. We use DataDirect's

XML Converters to transform 834 files into XML for use with our internal tools. Without this product, we would have to write our own 834-to-XML converter. Although it is possible for us to write such a converter, it would be expensive and require extensive quality assurance testing to ensure correctness. Buying the converters from DataDirect was an easy decision that has proven to deliver significant ROI.

**PRODUCT FUNCTIONALITY:** The DataDirect XML Converters are packaged as a .NET component. We use Microsoft's BizTalk server as an integration hub, and BizTalk is extensible using the .NET framework. We built an 834-to-XML converter using C#, and we host it within a BizTalk process. In addition to doing the conversion from 834 to XML, the component also validates the inbound 834 against the ANSI standard, allowing us to catch any formatting problems with the files. The benefits were rapid turnaround and time savings because writ-



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#### DataDirect XML Converters 4.0

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ing this on our own was extremely time consuming.

**STRENGTHS:** The many strengths of this product include its ease of use, good documentation, its ability to integrate with Stylus Studio and how quickly it works. With the addition of HIPAA 8345010A1 support, life insurance carriers will be able to send us membership data without resorting to a supplement file. Currently, we rely on a supplemental file to process life insurance membership data.

**WEAKNESSES:** The product itself is simple and solid. The biggest weakness in our opinion is the distribution of the product, which typically is sold in a cost per software model for traditional shrink-wrapped software

vendors. We provide a hosted application for our carrier partners in the insurance industry, which means we only needed a single copy of the software. This made coming to terms on a licensing agreement that was satisfactory to both parties somewhat of a challenge.

**SELECTION CRITERIA:** At the time we selected the product, we were using BizTalk Server 2006. We elected not to utilize the built-in X12 functionality offered by BTS 2006, as it was very cumbersome. DataDirect Technologies offered the best documentation of any of

the applications that we researched. We were able to quickly generate a proof of concept using the sample code provided with a trial version of the converter. Additionally, the product had to interoperate with .NET code. Many of the products we found were specific to Java.

**DELIVERABLES:** DataDirect HIPAA compliant XML Converters produce XML representations of ANSI X12 834 files for us.

**VENDOR SUPPORT:** DataDirect Technologies was very helpful dur-

ing the presales process. They made a product architect available to us during the POC phase of our engagement. Postsale, they have kept in touch with us to ensure our satisfaction with the product. The components work well, and we haven't had any problems in production postsale.

**DOCUMENTATION:**

The documentation was very good. There is a good bit of sample code in the documentation, which is exactly what we need as software developers.