



Using PathFinder to keep vital logistics data moving at Fowler Welch

OVERVIEW

Fowler Welch is a UK supply chain and logistics expert specialising in flexible, reliable and cost effective supply chain services for major names in both food manufacturing and retail. One of the company's key differentiators is its eight strategically located depots covering the UK, with dedicated teams on each site as points of contact and with full traceability of product in real time 24-7. Fowler Welch's customers rely on extensive IT integrations between systems to exchange real-time transactions for enabling supply chain planning and ensuring timely supply of products to retailers. Behind this integration is PathFinder from Orion, which has been used for file transfer and EDI purposes by Fowler Welch's IT team for over 10 years.

CHALLENGE

In 2020, Fowler Welch approached Orion to ask for consultancy assistance with a new requirement – to fetch specific data from an AWS-hosted API service as part of one of their data flows. This needed to happen on receipt of a particular message from another source, and the resulting data needing loading directly into an Oracle database.

Although it would have been possible to develop a bespoke programming solution for this, it would have been an expensive and slow exercise, and would have left a stand-alone solution that needed supporting. Fowler Welch asked if their requirement could better be handled by the API functionality within PathFinder, without requiring bespoke programming.

"The system has been key to our integrations with customers, and the IT team utilise it for a wide variety of both internal and external data exchanges."

It allows our team to not only manage a huge volume of messages easily, but quickly react to changes and catch issues as they occur with real time alerting and reporting".

Matthew Downes,
IT Director - Fowler Welch



SOLUTION

PathFinder 6.0 already contained the necessary tools to access an API, including the HTTPS communications and the ability to generate and process files in XML and JSON syntax. What was needed was the functionality to handle user authentication in AWS, specifically the use of IAM and the AssumeRole commands, along with the signature mechanism required for all requests to AWS-hosted APIs. This made a logical extension to the existing OAuth2 authentication already present in PathFinder for other API hosting services, and was therefore implemented by Orion on a beta basis for Fowler Welch. Once proven, the functionality was formally released in PathFinder with version 6.1.

The solution involved configuration of the AWS connection as a user on the Fowler Welch API account, and then the use of the AssumeRole instruction to gain access to the specific API for that role. Once connected, a set of fields was created in the PathFinder mapper from the source query to load to the API, and the correct response was received in XML format. That response file was then translated and loaded into Oracle using standard PathFinder functionality.

The solution went live in October 2020 and regularly processes several thousand queries a day. Fowler Welch have since upgraded their PathFinder environments to version 6.1 so that they are no longer running on a beta release – the upgrade went smoothly and the standard 6.1 AWS functionality is now being used to run the query.

Recently, Orion have assisted Fowler Welch in developing new technology for their customers.

“We worked with Matthew and the team to develop Amazon Web Services interfaces, which was a new technology for his team, and delivered on-time and within budget. This allowed Fowler Welch to deliver a key new customer project on time, with both teams working closely together on the set-up and testing.”

Martin Gordon-Kerr, Orion

ABOUT PATHFINDER

PathFinder is a data exchange tool, which can be used anywhere where there is a requirement to move a electronic business document between separate computer systems in a controlled, monitored and reliable fashion.

Although most commonly used for Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), the exchange of business documents (orders, invoices, despatch notes etc) in pre-defined formats between separate trading partners using a variety of communications protocols, PathFinder can be used for document transformation and communication for any purpose. Examples include the loading of orders into databases, automatic extraction and delivery of attachments from emails, and the use of APIs to extract and process data from both internal and cloud-based systems.

Companies upgrading to PathFinder from other solutions regularly tell us that PathFinder far surpasses the capabilities of their previously used solution.



For further information on PathFinder please visit our website at www.orionltd.co.uk or call us on 01572 771316



Linking your systems to each other and the world outside. Orion Consulting offers a range of EDI products, services and training to make your business work smoother, faster and more efficiently.