How Plains Midstream Canada Manages 80 Million Files of Unstructured Data

A case study.

Like many countries, Canada heavily regulates its oil and gas industry. With massive sites, complex documents, and high-pressure equipment all required to be registered with the Canadian government, Plains Midstream Canada needs to have accurate and timely information on hand at all times to operate safely and pass government audits.

Acquisitions and Zip Files

Plains Midstream Canada recently acquired several large plants and wanted to separate the information brought in-house. The acquisitions left them with tens of thousands of zipped files, which are inherently difficult to manage as they are packaged information. Using ActiveNav, Plains Midstream Canada quickly unpacked the zipped files to determine what they contained.

"On one network, we found over 15,000 zip files. After we unpacked them, we uncovered 872,000 files. Of those 800,000+ files, after classifying them and looking at duplicates, we found we only need just over 400,000 of them. Remediating 400,000 records off our network has equated to huge cost savings as we no longer need to back them up daily or pay for storage costs," said Erin Delorme, Information Management Specialist.

At a glance

CHALLENGES

- Compliance with government regulations
- Information brought in-house through acquisitions
- Protecting sensitive data
- A significant amount of ROT needed managing

BENEFITS

- Reduced storage costs
- Significant labor savings
- Auditable processes
- Complete visibility into data with automated workflows and data maps

ABOUT

- Plains Midstream Canada
- Oil & Gas
- Alberta, Canada
- 1,000+ Employees

"For one site, in terms of labor savings, it would have taken a human over 9 years to accomplish what we did in a few months. For me, it's not even about the cost savings, it's that an actual physical human being couldn't do this."

ROT Removal and Risk Reduction

The sheer volume of records in file shares, document management systems, and other content repositories represent a significant risk to the oil and gas industry due to uncontrolled access to sensitive information and poor data quality. Facilities, contracts, asset management, regulatory submissions, and well file documentation need to be managed effectively to facilitate data-driven decision making.

"Across our Canadian environment, I've found between 48% and 52% ROT (redundant, obsolete and trivial) data. A lot of this ROT are duplicate files. In this industry, we have so many people that need to use the same file for different purposes. And everybody's in their own little silos. We end up finding six or seven copies of the same report or file that needs to go to the government or needs to be in our system so that we can run the plant. ActiveNav has provided significant value by being able to identify and remediate these duplicates."

By analyzing their unstructured data systems, Plains Midstream Canada has dramatically reduced the amount of data under management and lowered their legal and regulatory risk exposure.

Migration and Metadata

Plains Midstream Canada currently uses SharePoint Online and is opening up to Office 365. Recognizing the importance of being able to see their information online at all times they created an always-on data mapping system using ActiveNav. Using these data maps, they migrate information to over 50,000 specified pieces of equipment such as coolers and exchangers in the field.

Given the large amount of equipment, there is a huge amount of metadata to manage, for example, serial numbers and equipment tags. Metadata helps to enrich content so that it is discoverable and actionable now, and in the future. Metadata models can also help information architecture after acquisitions.

Plains Midstream Canada pulls information into their data maps in ActiveNav to ensure that once they migrate data, they have the right mapping in place with the right metadata. They also renamed files using the concatenation of the different types of data they've collected. Renaming files has helped with file share restructuring which improves search and findability.

"Other things that we bring across are the dates that we need. I have information that I'm pulling from a network that we would have never found without ActiveNav. I have information from 1965. I need to know that I have that information for regulatory and operational efficiency. We need to know how far back this piece of equipment was installed. Being able to use ActiveNav to find this type of information has been another key accomplishment."

"Another significant area of cost savings, in the range of a few million dollars a year, is the time our employees are saving finding critical information they need, for example, to make sure something is running in the plant."

- Erin Delorme
Information Management Specialist

Ahead of Schedule and Under Budget

Plains Midstream Canada has been amazed by how much work they have been able to accomplish in a short period. They are ahead of schedule and substantially under budget.

Plains Midstream Canada has several terabytes of unstructured information. The cost to back that up every day is enormous. By removing close to 50% of ROT, they are not only enjoying huge cost savings but are also operating safely.

Auditable and Defensible

Given the highly regulated industry, every action needs to be carefully documented so that it can be shared with the government. *"Everything is documented, when it comes down to the audit logs, absolutely everything is documented so that you can track it back."* Having everything documented supports ongoing data governance and regulatory compliance, helping Plains Midstream Canada to pass government audits.

Looking Ahead

Ultimately, the success of a project is a combination of factors: people, processes, and technology. *"The success factor is that people are already filing their information away in the new online environment, in the cloud and it's safe and it's clean."* Working together, Plains Midstream Canada and ActiveNav have **discovered sensitive data, identified 50% ROT, and found cost savings worth millions of dollars.**

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