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| **With Project Nimbus, Experian MS GPD Innovates in the Digital Marketing Space** by Wolcott WheelerIn the space of just a few months, in an initiative known as Project Nimbus, software engineers from the DMS group based in Schaumburg, Illinois were able to migrate away from using traditional mainframe computing for direct marketing and leap into cutting-edge technology used for digital marketing.  The DMS team was able to accomplish this by mastering a new technology called [Hadoop](http://hadoop.apache.org/) that is faster, more cost-effective, and capable of processing today’s gigantic data sources.  In the process, they have created a pioneering marketing platform that has already had significant impact on business operations and clients.  Nimbus is expected to result in 15 new product launches in FY13.  At the recent Experian North America FY12 annual innovation awards luncheon, when Marketing Services’ Project Nimbus won the Launch of the Year award, Nimbus team members shared a $25,000 award.  Thanks to Nimbus, Yahoo! reduced its marketing campaign management time from days to minutes and shortened what was once an eight-week identity resolution update to less than a week.  At the same time, the DMS team has forged a partnership with [Cloudera](http://www.cloudera.com/), the largest contributor to open-source development for Hadoop, an open-source software framework that supports data-intensive distributed applications; Cloudera is considered one of the most notable firms in contemporary software technology.  Nimbus has been described as “the cross-channel identity resolution and audience creation platform of the future.”  It allows our clients to take client data from many different sources—email, social, search, direct mail, website analytics—and provides a “persistent identity” of a customer.  The DMS engineering team members all remark how working on Nimbus has been an exciting professional experience, giving them the opportunity to master a new system of the latest technology and to exercise their technical creativity.Jeff Hassemer, Senior Vice President of Product Strategy for Global Data Quality Management (DQM) is the head of product management for Project Nimbus.  “Project Nimbus represents a complete turnaround for the declining industry of traditional direct marketing and moves it into the high-growth space of digital marketing,” he said.  “Its technology is perceived as the most advanced of all of Marketing Services’ products, and it’s triggering the transformation of traditional direct marketing into digital marketing, the marketing arena of the future.”Jeff H 2012 cropped**Jeff Hassemer**Nimbus represents a major step toward the creation of a high-powered multi-channel integrated marketing platform to solve our clients’ future marketing needs and help fuel Experian’s continued growth.  Nimbus has already yielded a strong new product, Cross Channel Identity Resolution (CCIR), a new software platform for clients that creates a persistent customer identity from fragmented pieces of data—names, email addresses, postal addresses, Facebook IDs, twitter handles, and any future IDs.  Using this data, Marketing Services provides clients with a more complete view of their customers, enabling them to understand behavior trends and channel preferences for optimal marketing.   The key to Nimbus’ success is PINing technology.  “Our CCIR program earmarks the data it’s running and assigns a unique PIN, or Personal Identification Number,” said Joe McCullough, IT Business Analyst.  “Since CCIR is a learning engine, the program begins to associate related data to that PIN—name, phone number, postal address, and so on.  That’s how we assemble a persistent customer profile from disparate data.”**Joe cropped****Joe McCullough**“Linkage across disparate data sources is something no one else has,” said Anita Street, Senior Software Development Manager, whose team designs Nimbus’ user interface (UI).  “We here at Experian are the only marketing services organization that can knit together different data elements and provide clients a reliable portrait of a potential customer.”  Anita coined the term “Nimbus” for the project, based on its associations with cloud computing.Anita 2 cropped**Anita Street**Project Nimbus has yielded an interconnected series of other enhancements and products.  The Response Attribution Solution shows clients which customers respond to a given marketing campaign across multiple channels to measure the complete path to purchase, so clients can allocate their marketing budgets efficiently.  Audience Creation allows clients to connect their databases and pinpoint which customer segments they want to target.  “When it comes to using customer data to its fullest advantage, Experian Marketing Services has a historical advantage over the competition,” said Emad Georgy, the Chief Technology Officer of DMS and head of technology for the Nimbus project.  “For decades, we’ve been serving the world’s top retailers and have established an amazing data library.  Our competition doesn’t have our breadth of data, and with Nimbus, we can realize the maximum value of that data for multi-channel marketing purposes.”Emad Georgy_156 cropped**Emad Georgy**Nimbus is the product of both new hardware and software.  Originally it was conceived as a way to migrate from mainframe computing, which is too slow to process today’s increasingly large data sets.  Nimbus is powered by a cluster of servers linked together in a network that is highly scalable, providing the power, speed and performance necessary to meet client needs.  These are known as Hadoop clusters, so-called because they utilize Hadoop methodology.  Several members of the Nimbus team around the world have mastered Hadoop, and the cost savings of migrating off mainframe are expected to be considerable.servers**Hadoop servers**“When you combine Nimbus’ Cross Channel Identity Resolution, Response Attribution Solution, and Audience Creation solutions, you can scientifically pinpoint the best way to reach the customer through the most optimal channels,” said Paul Perry, director of software development with the Nimbus project in Schaumburg.  “It will give Experian Marketing Services a great advantage.  We’re on the cutting edge of digital marketing technology.”Paul cropped**Paul Perry**Project Nimbus neatly dovetails with MS GPD’s strategy of “accelerate, integrate, innovate”:**Accelerate** – MS GPD is moving to new technology that will speed up the processing of today’s huge data sets.**Integrate** – MS GPD is linking together customer information, creating an accurate 360-degree view of the customer.**Innovate** – No one else is using Hadoop for these sophisticated digital marketing purposes.It’s expected that Project Nimbus will last for another two years and that as it progresses, new marketing products will be created.  In the meantime, MS GPD’s engineers have been able to leapfrog from direct marketing to digital marketing, master an exciting new technology, and create a host of new products designed to give Experian a competitive advantage in the digital space. |

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