

Publication: Data Management Review

Column Title: Data Warehouse Delivery

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Headline: Nothing Changes but the Changes

Issue: July '96

Submitted via: CompuServe

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The world just keeps on changing, more quickly every day it seems, especially in our little corner of the world of information and technology. This is not a bad thing for those willing to ride the bucking bronco all the way to improved information access and delivery. New technologies are our leverage to break free of the artificial chains of past methods and approaches to our missions.

There are several major current and coming changes that will rock the data warehousing world. In my opinion your enterprise would be best advised to align your strategic plans to parallel the following coming changes:

1. Server centric solutions

The world of the fat client is quickly coming to an end as more of our world is relocated to the server layers of our architectures. The drivers for this phenomenon are the need to share services and meta data between applications, and the shift to thin client architectures.

This will accelerate the rapid decline and death of fat client Query and Reporting tools, which will be complete by '97. The critical enabler here is seamless drill through from OLAP/ROLAP views into the detail with a simple double click. Most users actually want to do OLAP, they just don't know it exists, and are putting up with Q&R tools in the meantime. The OLAP/ROLAP view of the data warehouse will become the default view.

Another manifestation of the predominance of server based solutions will be the rise of transformation engine based Extract, Mapping and Transformation tools. The old high priced code generator class tools will be abandoned like the hulking, expensive, battleships of WWII when the agile aircraft carrier battle groups redefined naval warfare. These relatively inexpensive transformation based tools will sweep the marketplace beginning in mid '96. By '97 the code generators will be relegated to a small segment of the market, isolated in the few remaining strongholds of COBOL survivalists. The transformation engine products will continue to drive down the cost of this segment to the point where solutions will be available for under \$50k instead of an average deal price of \$250k+ of the code generators.

2. Web

There's not much more that can be written about the World Wide Web and how it's going to change the world, although I suspect it will stop short of making our coffee in the morning, to the chagrin of some breathless commentators.

Amazingly enough however, as little as six months ago there were vendor CEOs and VPs all across our industry who still doubted that it was going to be significant in our market segment. Of course, these are the companies that are being left in the dust as their competitors announce web access to the information sets their tools are accessing and creating. Now is an excellent time to take a snapshot of the industry's tool vendors. Those that have web solutions available now are the ones with vision and leadership. The laggards are companies to avoid.

The web will redefine our data warehouse piece of the world, as it will the rest of the known universe. Sooner than you can possibly imagine you will see Intranet and Internet global distribution of your data warehouse resources. You will witness thin clients on network appliances seamlessly accessing, ordering and distributing information. In fact, your competition is probably already doing it. If you don't already have a team member or a task force aggressively addressing this current reality, get started now.

3. OCSD: On-line Content Scheduling and Delivery

Watch for this new acronym, or some other variation, in the weeks and months ahead. This new product segment will be a relatively short term phenomenon as the capabilities of its products get absorbed into the server operating systems.

These products allow the sharing of resources across the enterprise. They are based on a catalog of the available resources (queries, OLAP data sets, reports, spreadsheets, etc.) and server based services that allow users to order and schedule delivery of a resource in a variety of formats (spreadsheet format, text, e-mail, etc.).

We'll look at this segment in detail next month, when I'll describe in detail what features and functions are required to play here, who the winners and losers will be, and how long the segment will last.

4. The Outsourced Data Warehouse

In the near to mid term many organizations are going to realize that it is more economical to share the resources required to design, implement, and maintain a data warehouse than to build the technology and expertise in house. This trend will largely follow the web server model, in which companies specialize in hosting and maintaining large capacity servers and their attendant content. As we come to realize the information resources contained in data warehouses are merely content, they will slide into the same commodity category as hosting web pages is now.

Large scale data warehouse SWAT team oriented service organizations will arise that will specialize in swooping in, assessing needs, implementing transformation engines, tapping large volume pipelines into the sources, and sucking the data off into remotely hosted data warehouses. They will take on the onerous task of maintaining 24 by 7 uptime, quick implementations of rapidly changing user requirements, and expedited integration of new data sources.

This all adds up to a brave new world. One filled with new challenges and new solutions. Now is the time to align your organization to these coming changes, so you can leverage these new realities to your advantage.

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