

: *What will the DSS headline be in FORTUNE Magazine in 2010?*

By Dan Power

Editor, DSSResources.com

Readers may recall my promise in the September 25, 2005 trip report from Teradata Partners to discuss this topic. Following the opening general session at Partners on Monday, September 19, 2005, I spoke briefly with new NCR CEO Bill Nuti. "Nuti asked me what I thought the DSS headline would be in FORTUNE Magazine in 2010." I promised to "expand on my answer to Nuti's question in a future Ask Dan!"

Well let's start with what I told Bill Nuti. I was a bit caught off guard. I had introduced myself and I hadn't expected such a hard question. My recollection is that I told him I wasn't sure there would be a headline about decision support systems. I explained that it all depended upon what CEOs like himself did in using DSS in the next few years. I then asked him if he used a Blackberry for email, phone and Web access. He said no and reminded me he had been the CEO of Symbol Technologies. I wasn't very familiar with Symbol, but assumed the company had some type of handheld computing device. We exchanged further pleasantries and mercifully ended the conversation. Good CEOs look ahead and Bill Nuti was getting input to help him do that. He probably asks many people he meets the same question about year 2010.

According to the NCR web site, "Before joining NCR in August 2005, Nuti served as president and CEO of Symbol Technologies where he strengthened the company's product portfolio and positioned the company as a leading supplier in the emerging radio frequency identification (RFID) industry. Prior to that, he was chief operating officer of Symbol where he led a challenging turnaround. Nuti joined Symbol in 2002 following 10 years at Cisco Systems where he held positions of increasing responsibility, advancing to the dual role of senior vice president of the company's Worldwide Service Provider Operations and U.S. Theater Operations. Prior to his Cisco experience, Nuti held sales and management positions at IBM, Netrix Corporation and Network Equipment Technologies."

Nuti is an energetic, 41 year old CEO and he can lead the way in expanding the boundaries of computerized decision support systems. For example, one thing I admire about Larry Ellison, CEO of Oracle,

: *What will the DSS headline be in FORTUNE Magazine in 2010?*

is how he has been "leading the way". He actually uses Oracle decision support tools like "Daily Business Intelligence".

Since returning to Cedar Falls, I've investigated Symbol Technologies. It has more than one billion dollars in revenue and it offers customers "mobility solutions". Recently, Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company announced it would deploy more than 6,000 Symbol MC9000 mobile computers for real-time enterprise mobility.

I also decided to catch up on the types of stories related to technology and decision making that FORTUNE has published in recent years. I scanned some issues of FORTUNE and I did a search at the fortune.com Web site for the phrase "decision support". The results were not encouraging; FORTUNE is not the bell weather reporter of technology change. Also, most of the 75 search results were irrelevant.

In FORTUNE magazine of July 26, 2004 in an IT Special Report, Stephanie Mehta had an article titled "The Future Is On the Line". The lead reads "Meet VOIP, the new technology that promises to cut your phone bill and change the way you communicate (never mind the geeky name)." The introduction of mass-market VoIP services started in 2004, but the technology was discussed in the trade publications for at least 2-3 years prior to 2004. Mehta notes "primitive early versions appealed mainly to nerds and skinflints willing to endure horrid sound quality for the cheap thrill of talking on the Net." I hope Mehta doesn't write the FORTUNE story about decision support systems.

My search identified an article on "How Successful People Make Big Decisions" in June 2005. Marine General Peter Pace explains that "On a battlefield, you don't have a lot of time to gather opinions." Paul Rinaldi, an Air Traffic Controller at Dulles International Airport, explained "You know the first day if someone's going to make it as an air-traffic controller. It's not so much analytical as it is making a decision quickly and sticking with it. You have to do that knowing that some of the decisions you're going to make are going to be wrong, but you're going to make that decision be right." Ideally we want to improve computerized decision support for military commanders, air traffic controllers, emergency managers and responders and business CEOs.

: What will the DSS headline be in FORTUNE Magazine in 2010?

In a July 2001 FORTUNE feature on Industrial Management and Technology, Stuart Brown discussed "Making Decisions in a Flood of Data". The subhead read "There's sunken treasure in industry's deep databases. Here's a breakthrough way drugmakers and others find it." Brown wrote "Businesses are drowning, just drowning in data. And they asked for it. Computers today make it relatively easy for industries ranging from pharmaceuticals to computer chips to oil exploration to amass vast archives of information." Again Brown wasn't telling us something new or especially insightful. The "flood of data" was old news. Data warehouses, visualization, data mining all old news in 2001.

Thomas Stewart in a FORTUNE article dated June 26, 2000 had a Leading Edge feature titled "Making Decisions In Real Time". He noted "We've been talking about managing in real time. We've looked at the forces driving companies to manage this way (see "The Leading Edge," April 3, in the fortune.com archive), the characteristics of real-time businesses (May 1), and the stunning gains in asset utilization that real-time management makes possible (May 29). This time we'll look at what may be real-time companies' greatest advantage: They make decisions differently." These four articles reflected changing information technologies, but the topic of real-time decision making has been discussed for 20 years. Stewart argued that with real-time data managers can make decisions faster and "adjust on the fly". He cites two examples, real-time manufacturing at Alcoa and real-time management accounting at Cisco. Alcoa CFO Richard Kelson is quoted "The earlier you get information, the easier it is to fix a problem." Supposedly real-time information lets Cisco "devolve power radically. Every supervisor can see everything about operations she runs."

Finally, Mary Cronin in a September 1997 article discussed using the Web to push key data to decision makers. She reported that "Pat Brockett, executive VP of worldwide sales and marketing at National Semiconductor, the \$2.6-billion-a-year maker of computer chips and devices, credits the Web with helping to turn a \$2 heat-sensing item into a \$100-million-a-year product. By tapping into crucial data on its Website, National was able to accurately forecast extraordinary demand for the device" The short article is about how "National's interactive marketing group added its own channel to Pointcast, called National Advisor." It allowed managers to "customize the National Advisor reports, segment data by product lines, and view it in the form they prefer-pie charts, fever lines, and so on."

: What will the DSS headline be in FORTUNE Magazine in 2010?

We don't hear much about Pointcast. By 1999 its advertising revenue model was a failure, but today's business managers still need the push technology tried at National Semiconductor.

So FORTUNE publishes a few articles related to computerized decision support, but the popular business press lags the technology press. My guess is that FORTUNE leads the adoption curve however and that its features come midway in the technology adoption process.

So what's "hot" in the technology press? In CIO Magazine of October 1, 2005, Tom Davenport wrote a column titled "Analyze This". He quotes a recent speech by Harvard President Lawrence Summers. Summers says "we are becoming rational, analytical and data-driven in a far wider range of activity than we ever have been before."

Davenport notes "More and more companies are using analytics to drive their decision-making processes. But there's a right and a wrong way to do it." He explains his theory of how analytics can make organizations very successful with an example of the New England Patriots.

He notes "The Patriots have managed to win the Super Bowl three times in the past four years; also with an analytical approach. The team uses data and analytical models extensively, both on and off the field. In-depth analytics help the team select players and stay below the NFL salary cap. Patriots coaches and players are renowned for their extensive study of game film and statistics, and Head Coach Bill Belichick reads articles by academic economists on statistical probabilities of football outcomes. Off the field, the team uses detailed analytics to assess and improve the 'total fan experience.' At every home game, for example, 20 to 25 people have specific assignments to make quantitative measurements of the stadium food, parking, personnel, bathroom cleanliness and other factors."

What is analytics? According to Davenport it is "Business intelligence. Statistics, decision support and all that." He noted "It may strike you as a little nerdy, but you'd undoubtedly grant business analytics a place in the pantheon of IT applications."

: *What will the DSS headline be in FORTUNE Magazine in 2010?*

Analytics and decision support is "hot" and a "little nerdy". Jorge L. Ortiz, USA TODAY, 10/12/2005, in a story titled "Astros pitching staff a full house of aces" notes Roger Clemens "With a BlackBerry full of information about hitters on hand, he searches for clues, patterns, anything that will help him through the next inning, all the while beseeching pitchers who wander by to share any tidbit they have picked up." At 43, Clemens is wired and analytical.

So are we finally entering an "Analytical Golden Age"? Are the hopes of Operations Research and Quality Management gurus finally reaching deeply into our business culture? Perhaps ... a note of caution! In a 1982 Harvard Business Review article Jack Rockart and Mike Treacy reported "The CEO Goes On-Line". They overestimated the diffusion of CEO use of personal computers, but the article stimulated the move toward executive information systems, data warehouses and business intelligence. Yet even today many CEOs are not on-line.

So there should be a DSS headline in FORTUNE in 2010! Perhaps it will focus on innovative technologies like electronic paper displays, Global Positioning System navigation or using RFID data for real-time decision support. Senior management is looking more closely at enterprise-wide analytics and medical doctors are using wireless handheld computers and Tablet PCs for electronic prescribing. A recent Teradata survey shows managers are facing "more decisions, more complexity, and more data". We are at a technology inflection point.

The headline I'd like to see in 2010 is "The Wired CEO Uses Real-Time Decision Support". Globe trotting CEOs stay connected with staff wherever they go; CEOs receive alerts, are tracked using GPS, have access to voice and video on their personal digital devices, track competitor activity and monitor performance in real-time. Perhaps CEOs will use a wearable computer with a more sophisticated display device or a new device from Symbol Technologies, RIM or Palm. Massive data warehouses will support CEO alerts, queries and tracking. A business command center will track the movements of key executives and monitor environmental changes that might impact them. Push and pull technologies will keep the CEO wired.

I don't have a Blackberry or a Palm, but if Roger Clemens has one,

: *What will the DSS headline be in FORTUNE Magazine in 2010?*

then at least Bill Nuti needs to experiment with one or an even more advanced personal digital device. CEOs need to lead by example. Of course Clemens' hamstring problems in Game 1 of the 2005 Baseball World Series reminds us that the execution of decisions and plans is crucial! The key to success is analysis, planning AND execution.

So Bill Nuti you can write the headline for 2010. You are in a position to envision and create the near term future for computerized decision support. The decision support technologies you actually use in the next few years can make headlines in 2010.

References

Brown, Stuart F., "Making Decisions in a Flood of Data," FORTUNE magazine, July 25, 2001, at URL
<http://www.fortune.com/fortune/technology/articles/0,15114,371087,00.html>.

Cronin, M., "Using The Web To Push Key Data To Decision Makers," FORTUNE magazine, September 29, 1997, Vol. 136, Iss.6, p. 254 (1 page), at URL
<http://www.fortune.com/fortune/articles/0,15114,377704,00.html>

Davenport, T., "Analyze This," CIO magazine, October 1, 2005, at URL
http://www.cio.com/archive/100105/comp_advantage.html .

"How Successful People Make Big Decisions", FORTUNE magazine, June 27, 2005 at URL
<http://www.fortune.com/fortune/fortune75/articles/0,15114,1070964,00.html>

Mehta, S. N., "The Future Is On the Line", FORTUNE magazine, July 26, 2004, Vol. 150, No. 2, at URL
<http://www.fortune.com/fortune/technology/articles/0,15114,371087,00.html>.

: What will the DSS headline be in FORTUNE Magazine in 2010?

Ortiz, Jorge L., "Astros pitching staff a full house of aces," USA Today, Posted 10/11/2005 10:05 PM, Updated 10/12/2005 11:48 AM at http://www.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/nl/astros/2005-10-11-cover-rotation_x.htm.

Power, D., "Report from 2005 Teradata PARTNERS Conference," DSS News, Vol. 6, No. 21, September 25, 2005.

Stewart, T. A., "The Leading Edge - Making Decisions In Real Time," FORTUNE magazine, June 26, 2000, Vol. 142, Iss.1 p. 332 (2 pages) at URL <http://www.fortune.com/fortune/articles/0,15114,366951,00.html> .

Wearable Computing at the MIT Media Lab, at <http://www.media.mit.edu/wearables>

XybernautResearch, wearable systems, at <http://www.xybernaut.com>

Author: Daniel Power
Last update: 2006-10-22 17:21