: What are some examples of web-based DSS?

Most people who read about decision support systems want to try one. This is understandable given the promise associated with an information system that is intended to support and improve decision making. A previous Ask Dan! identified some DSS demonstration software that could be downloaded (DSS News, 01/05/2003). Those systems show some of the possibilities, but web-based and web-enabled DSS are more accessible and as powerful as DSS built using client/server technologies. In general, it is much easier to try or "test drive" a web-based DSS. Web technologies have expanded the range of DSS that are built and deployed, but some "new" DSS are more impressive and consequential than others. A few vendors have demonstrations on their sites of DSS built using their software and there are many DSS targeted to the general public that are available on the web. In general, narrowly targeted or focused DSS and intra-organizational (internal) DSS are not accessible to the public.

Most types of DSS can be found on the web, but it is hard to find publicly available examples of sophisticated, web-based, communications-driven DSS. A first generation web-based GDSS, TCBWorks (cf., Dennis, 1998), was available for academic use in the mid-90s, but it is no longer accessible. Current demonstrations of web-based, communications-driven DSS tend to have low levels of functionality and focus on asynchronous communications.

Recently, Professor Shashidar Kaparthi and I (Power and Kaparthi, 2002) wrote an article that expanded and updated Chapter 11 in my DSS book. Also, this semester my students evaluated some web-based DSS. So this Ask Dan! shares some links and a fun exercise involving categorizing and evaluating Web-based DSS. Innovative examples of all 5 categories of DSS can be found on the Web, see if you can sort out the following web-based DSS.

Web-based DSS Links

Some of these sites have multiple decision support tools and you may need to "look hard" to find them. Some of the simpler tools are called "calculators" and the more complex tools are full-fledged DSS.

Big Charts -- http://bigcharts.marketwatch.com/

Databeacon Demos -- http://www.storydata.com

Documentum eRoom - http://www.documentum.com

elaws Family and Medical Leave Act Advisor - http://www.dol.gov/elaws/fmla.htm

Fidelity Calculators - http://www.401k.com/401k/tools/tools.htm

Inspire - http://interneg.carleton.ca/inspire/

MSN Autos - http://autos.msn.com/Default.aspx

Pinnacor - http://finance.pinnacor.com/

Principal Financial - http://www.principal.com/calculators/index.htm

WATERSHEDSS - http://www.water.ncsu.edu/watershedss/

Categorization and Evaluation Exercise

: What are some examples of web-based DSS?

Please evaluate one of the above web-based DSS. What type or category of DSS is the application? Communications-driven, Data-driven, Document-driven, Knowledge-driven or Model-driven? What is the purpose of the specific DSS? Who are the targeted or intended users of the DSS? What is your evaluation of the DSS? Is it useful? Is it likely to improve decision making? Please explain and justify your conclusions.

References

Dennis, Alan R., "Lessons from Three Years of Web Development", Communications of the ACM, v41, n7, July 1998, pp. 112-113.

Power, D., "Where can I find or download a DSS demo?" DSS News, 01/05/2003.

Power, D. and S. Kaparthi, "Building Web-based Decision Support Systems", Studies in Informatics and Control, Vol. 11, Number 4, Dec. 2002, pp. 291-302, URL http://www.ici.ro/ici/revista/sic2002_4/art1.pdf

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