

Delivering Information Outreach to the Masses: A Critical Requirement of Today's "Insight Economy"

Information Outreach meets the requirement to widely disseminate information across the extended Internet-based enterprise



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FIGHTING FOR VISIBILITY

The Idea Economy. It was the economy of hockey-stick growth charts, endless possibility, growth before profit. It was a fun time, it really was. But things are a bit different now. Berkshire Hathaway Chairman Warren Buffett is wise again, and Cisco's CEO John Chambers – not to mention lots of other CEOs who are re-mastering their numbers – is fighting to get visibility on his business.

If the Idea Economy was then, the Insight Economy is now. The Internet, extranets and intranets – coupled with the need to focus on core competencies – has indelibly altered the fingerprint of today's corporation.

The corporate walls have opened up to embrace mobile employees, suppliers, customers and strategic partners in an information ecosystem that is today's extended enterprise. But while great ideas are still required, what is often more urgently required today is unfettered visibility on all aspects of the business. And that visibility has to be disseminated widely to all of the stakeholders in the business so they can act to keep the business healthy and competitive. Getting insight out is now the name of the game.

MASS VISIBILITY REQUIRES MASS DISSEMINATION

To see how this new game can be played out technologically, we can look beyond the Idea Economy hype of Internet excess to the nuts-and-bolts of how information is moving to mass audiences.

Daily, most of us use technologies like Acrobat, Flash, and RealPlayer. Huge populations of Internet-based user audiences are taking advantage of a widening selection of software technologies that allow for universal dissemination of various types of information, from digital documents to streaming animations to mp3 music. Increasingly, these technologies allow each member of a mass audience to shape his or her interaction as something unique, so that no document, home page or jazz collection will be experienced precisely the same way.

THE NEW DEMAND: SIMPLICITY WITH SOPHISTICATION

On the Internet, the information power is definitely moving to the people. They have come to expect that the software they use in their Internet-based existence will require no training, manual, or software installation. They click, and it happens, and if it doesn't

happen, they leave. Yet with all that simplicity they also demand sophistication and desktop integration capabilities, so that if they want to magnify their information and deepen their experience, they can with a few more clicks on a toolbar.

INFORMATION OUTREACH VS. TRADITIONAL ANALYTICS

Given the dynamics that are in play, the traditional data analysis vendor is in a tough spot. Raised in a data warehouse, fed a steady diet of fat client application sets, and sheltered inside the corporate firewall, traditional vendors in the analysis space are struggling to meet the rising expectations of the Insight Economy.

For extended enterprises seeking to serve the analysis needs of mass audiences there are vendors and applications targeting a new market space called Information Outreach. Like the technology that must power it, the definition of Information Outreach is simple, yet powerful: the delivery of self-personalized, interactive information and analytical capabilities to large Internet-based user audiences.

Let's consider an example. A large corporation provides its sales force with mobile phones and is paying the bills as the phones are for work calls only. Due to cost control measures, the company wants to see a breakdown of the calls to guard against fraudulent use and also to evaluate calling plans. Fortunately, the wireless telco has implemented Information Outreach technologies that enable the customer to drill down into its phone bill information online. Now, the company can have its regional managers view this information and take the required action rather than limiting this insight to a small group within the finance department.

This couldn't have been accomplished using traditional analysis solutions which offer a desk-centric, data warehouse-dependent approach that encourages one-size-fits-all deployments of corporate information. And because they offer fixed seat-license pricing models, most existing analytics solutions are developed for use by a small group of decision makers, causing corporate data to be a vastly underused resource.

Information Outreach technologies on the other hand are Internet-centric applications that understand the most powerful, most meaningful information solutions reside in the minds and fingertips of individuals, not necessarily the keepers of corporate systems. The Insight Economy encourages and even demands Information Outreach in an Internet-based world where information and insight must flow seamlessly throughout the extended enterprise.

Industry pundits aren't surprised by the move to tear down walls that are hiding insight. In fact, IDC, in a study entitled *Data Warehousing Tools: Market Forecast and Analysis, 2000-2004* states: "Spending priorities will shift from capturing and storing the data toward delivering the information to a wide range of users."

Finally, the huge growth of B2B and B2C commerce on the Internet has created new requirements that cannot be filled economically or in a timely way with traditional analysis software.

Traditional data analysis tools have focused on distributing of information and data to small internal audiences. These audiences have received a considerable amount of training to become fluent in the use of these tools. The tool sets in use are aimed at answering broad and deep questions about the data.

As a result of its limitations to address mass audiences and its general internal organizational focus, these traditional technologies stall once they get outside the corporate firewall. They are typically based on the premise that the server not only holds all the data, but also performs the majority of calculations against the data. Client software offers only limited, if any, calculation capabilities. While this architecture works well for a limited user audience manipulating a large data volume, it is not suitable for decentralized deployment of interactive data to the Internet-based masses.

Information Outreach goes beyond these merely customized reports. By providing users with the ability to interact with customized data sets, the Internet-based masses in today's Insight Economy can refine their information, enhance it with their own insights and- when required-share with others. Information Outreach can be thought of as the last of three stages of B2B or B2C information interaction. Those stages are:

Stage 1: Limited Internal Distribution

Data analysis and reporting are inwardly focused (traffic analysis, buying behavior etc.) to a small audience. E-commerce has begun.

Stage 2: Business Insight for the Enterprise

Information from demand chain (e.g. CRM), supply chain and/or the newly combined value chain is fused with e-commerce activities to drive customization and thus increase customer/supplier loyalty. Data reporting and analysis importance increases, but the audience remains internal.

Stage 3: Information Outreach for the Extended Enterprise

Not only is information (data, reporting and analysis) being shared inside the organization, but it is also shared to further tighten the relationships with external audiences. As the size of the audience increases dramatically, the requirements for the software move from toolset to software appliance to highlight ease of use, ease of deployment, scalability, ease of integration and offline usage. Simply servicing static reports and/or raw data is not enough for organizations at this stage.

In contrast to traditional analysis tools, the information recipients/customers in the Information Outreach stage are mostly outside the corporate boundaries. The audience is comprised of employees, suppliers, customers, partners and in some cases the public at large.

Positioned for the latest, highest potential stage of interaction in the Insight Economy, Information Outreach is now a necessary requirement for the extended enterprise. In an economic environment that is more about cost control than growth, the enterprise must disseminate information widely to a mass audience with technology that requires no training, no manual and no software installation. The technology they need must be simple, yet powerful: a click to get insight out.

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