

The Case for Knowledge Management

If Data is Unstructured, Can it Provide Information?

The Integration of systems and information flows is one of the most challenging, and often most frustrating, issues facing organizations and the software vendor community today. Making use of the knowledge and information held within an organization is the challenge that businesses and software suppliers need to meet head-on, if they are going to make better use of what is, after all, a life-blood commodity for industry. It has often been said that knowledge is power, and operators in the world of corporate IT are becoming experts at collecting and storing knowledge and information in the form of data. However, frustration often sets in because making better use of that information, to achieve corporate advantage, is an area where there is real need for improvement.

The Big Picture

Information held by organizations, its Intellectual Property (IP) if you like, is held on two levels:

1. The data that it has captured and stored in a structured and controlled manner; and
2. The data that is taken in by employees and systems for knowledge purposes in an uncontrolled, and therefore unstructured manner.

Corporate enterprises worldwide expend large amounts of their energy capturing and storing information about every subject imaginable. But unfortunately, it is a fact that around 85 per cent of all data stored is held in an unstructured format, making access, identification, management, and control a major issue. Turning data into information and turning that information into useful knowledge is a challenge that Internet content providers are already addressing. However, corporate users have been slower to take it up and, as a result, organizations waste vast amounts of time, that they cannot afford, in trying to pull together related information from disparate data stores.

Conclusion

Most end-users of IT systems today, from the office junior to the CEO, have a primary need to access and work with data that is stored somewhere deep-down within various corporate information repositories. The urgency of their need for information is probably only overshadowed by the lack of time available to complete their current projects. Therefore, systems that address these issues with products that are focused on making the best use possible of information which has been stored in an unstructured format need to be valued more highly, especially today, where time pressures appear to be tougher than ever before.

Computer users of all types need to have the tools to do their jobs. They need to have the ability to find, access, and display information quickly and efficiently. The common scenario found within business today is of users who know that the information they require exists, but due to its structure, or its location within the organization, they cannot get to it easily. Added to this, the need for most computer users to work more intelligently, within ever decreasing windows of opportunity, leaves us with a real need for systems that can work with, and add value to, information.

Corporate Intranets and the Internet add significantly to the problems of information overload, and as a result, there is an urgent need for more products that can address at least some of these issues.