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User Views

Read: [What Do You Know?](#)
Read: [Open Options](#)

What Do You Know?

A pop quiz on Informix past, present, and future.
Stuart Litel

Did you know that Janet Perna, the general manager of IBM Information Management software (the division of IBM that owns Informix), recently retired? I first spoke to Janet in 2001, on the day IBM announced it would purchase Informix. We constantly debated the merits of Informix over the next years. Janet asked me to "embrace all IBM technology, as it was first class." And she was right: IBM technology is first class. And, Janet, you're also first class. Good luck in all your future endeavors.

Did you know that Perna's successor, Ambuj Goyal, is an IBM veteran and was most recently general manager of the Lotus Division? Not long ago, I had the chance to meet Goyal and spend an hour with him. When I asked about his plans for Informix, he told me, "I love all my children," referring to the many databases in the IBM Information Management portfolio. And, from what he told me, he loves all his children equally, especially those products that make money for IBM. Guess what? Informix makes money for IBM.

Did you know that some people still believe Informix will go away? I want to bury these rumors. Informix won't be going away. In fact, after my meeting with Goyal, I felt quite happy about what I believe will be in store for Informix. Things are looking better than they have since the acquisition announcement.

Did you know that Informix was founded 25 years ago in California by Roger Sippl? The company was then called Relational Database Systems, and its products were known as Informix database software. In the early years, the tools (such as SQL, Perform, Ace, ESQL, and 4GL) were sold and the database was given away for free. That changed years later when the database was opened up to work with other products. When the company went public in the 1980s and changed its name to Informix Corp., it became the number-one performing stock based on percentage stock gain during the period from Jan. 1, 1990,

to Dec 31, 1995, for any U.S. stock exchange.

I recently read *The Real Story of Informix and Phil White* (Sand Hill Publishing, 2005). Written by Steve Martin (no, not *that* Steve Martin), who worked for Informix during the 1990s, the book sheds a lot of light on the company's history. I highly recommend the book, available at *www.storyofinformix.com* (IIUG members even get a $4.00 discount).

Did you know that after pulling off a successful joint conference in 2005, the IIUG and IDUG are joining forces for a conference in 2006? Joe Burns and Cindy Lichtenauer will lead the event in Tampa, Fla., May 7 to 11. This will be the largest gathering of Informix users in the world, so mark your calendar for 2006 and visit *www.iiug.org/conf* for more details.

Did you know that the IIUG Web site offers more than 25 special interest groups via email or Web-based forums on everything from database engines to tools and has the largest known repository of Informix tools, programs, tips, and tricks anywhere? That may be why IIUG membership (which, by the way, is free) is up more than 50% since the IBM buyout.

Did you know IBM has a special tele-sales marketing organization to help IBM business partners market their IBM-related products at no charge? Informix partners have used this unique cross-brand lead generation program to reach out to small and midsize business customers using IBM representatives. The team's mission is to promote partner solutions that include IBM software components. This service showcases the global cooperation between IBM and Informix partners and resellers. Please contact William Freiwah at wfreiwah@ca.ibm.com for more information (and tell him Stuart sent you).

And, finally, did you know that sales of Informix are up quarter over quarter at IBM? Please encourage anyone with concerns about Informix's future to send me a note at www.iiug.org/president.

Stuart Litel is CTO of Kazer Inc. and president of the International Informix Users Group.

Open Options

DB2 offers the right solution for the right task.
David Beulke

Business intelligence (BI) is implemented in different ways at different companies. In my experience with clients, no one method or solution fits all. This point of view was recently confirmed at seminars and briefings I attended on BI solutions from several vendors. I emerged convinced that DB2 offers the best BI platform. Why? Because it's an open platform, which encourages interchangeable options. This flexibility allows a company to choose the specific analytic tools that will provide value and return on

investment for its business. Many vendors force their own platforms, tools, or options; DB2 offers a huge list of compatible vendors and open-source solutions.

Building context, sequence, pattern, and cluster analysis into a unique BI solution makes a company better prepared to manage many key areas such as customer relationships, operating costs, fraud management, distribution management, and sales analysis. Some of my clients have achieved tremendous results from BI solutions; examples include sales analysis solutions that identified the effectiveness of various marketing techniques and logistical shipping analysis that cut almost a full day off delivery time via better scheduling and transportation asset placement. In these cases, the BI solutions paid for themselves quickly.

Developing these solutions requires focusing on simple, critical aspects of the business to provide bottom-line benefits. Evaluating different vendor solutions and analyzing their methodologies and techniques shows the different ways to add value and context to these unique situations. Solution analysis takes time, but skipping it can lead to failed or disappointing projects.

DB2's scalability is a plus for BI solutions that analyze massive amounts of data. BI solutions also benefit from DB2 features such as materialized query tables to summarize and pinpoint data such as up-to-the-moment figures for inventory, sales, or other transactions. And DB2, with its wonderful SQL family compatibility and data warehousing SQL functions such as RANK and CUBE, provides good performance on mainframe and Linux, Unix, and Windows.

IDUG offers a variety of resources to help you understand vendor options. At conferences, you can talk to many vendors and hear from real DB2 users. IDUG's primary focus is to help DB2 users interact with each other and learn the latest ideas, best practices, and techniques.

David Beulke, a past president of IDUG, is a DB2 consultant, author, and lecturer who specializes in database performance, data warehouses, and Internet applications.

Return to Article