

database

TRENDS AND APPLICATIONS

Now: Embedded Real-Time Business Intelligence

IN AN EXCLUSIVE Q&A, PAUL GRABSCHEID, vice president, strategic planning for InterSystems Corp., describes how his company is addressing a new emerging reality for business intelligence.

DBTA: How's business at InterSystems?

GRABSCHEID: We're still a privately owned company, and we're still growing, still profitable. In 2007, we were at \$229 million in revenue. This year, we're at \$275 million. We're still focused on the same business model.

DBTA: InterSystems just released a new product called DeepSee. Tell us about it.

GRABSCHEID: DeepSee is a business intelligence offering with four major components: Analyzer, Architect, Designer, and Connector. Analyzer is the fun part; it's the tool that's used to display and explore and drill down—the things that a user would do from a BI standpoint with the data.

DBTA: Why DeepSee? How is it different from InterSystems' Caché and Ensemble products?

GRABSCHEID: If you look at our business up until now, we've been focused on the "run-the-business" transaction processing part of what organizations do. If you look at where our technology ends up, and what people build with it, it's those core, repeated, do-it-over-and-over-again, it's-got-to-work-all-the-time kinds of systems. We've always told people we've got the world's best database technology for transaction processing. We don't for data warehousing, but people ignore us and use our technology for data warehousing anyway.

What began to change our view of the world a couple of years ago was that more and more existing customers, or existing application partners, were saying to us: "Data warehouse is all good. But we've got some other analytic needs—some other business intelligence needs that are more operational in nature, that really belong inside our transaction processing run-the-business applications—that really need access to up-to-the-minute information, not stuff I extracted last week."



PAUL GRABSCHEID, VICE-PRESIDENT
INTERSYSTEMS CORP.

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DBTA: Is this behind-the-scenes business intelligence pervasive BI?

GRABSCHEID: There's lots of terminology in the markets around this whole thing. People talk about pervasive BI, operational BI, or embedded BI. I don't know which words are going to prevail. For us, the two key attributes are "embedded" and "real time." Embedded for us means that we take our technology to our DeepSee product application developers. Traditionally, BI technology hasn't gone to application developers, it's gone to end-users as kind of an application-independent or agnostic infrastructure kind of sale. Our approach is to the application developer, so they can build BI capabilities into the application and deliver them as part of the application.

DBTA: What do application developers do with DeepSee?

GRABSCHEID: We bring application developers the technology, and they do three things. First, they create a new data model. There is obviously a data model in their transaction processing applications, designed by technical people for application development purposes. It's not analytically oriented; it's not designed for the users of BI. So we need a different data model for that. Second, they typically find places in their applications, in the screens or in the workflows, to plug in some BI capability. We give them the means to do that. Third, they create some dashboards, some formatted reports, some other things that are around the outside of the application that they'll deliver to their customers.

DBTA: Do customers need InterSystems Caché or Ensemble databases to leverage DeepSee?

GRABSCHEID: Fundamentally, you need to have Caché or Ensemble for this to be interesting. But if you have data in some other systems, you can bring data in from those other systems as well. Our guess is that in the vast majority of customer situations, 80–to–95% of the data will come from Ensemble. In time that may change, but we'll start with the best immediate return, starting with the people who already use our technology.

DBTA: Most people are accustomed to thinking about business intelligence data coming off of a data warehouse.

GRABSCHEID: This doesn't replace the problems the data warehouse addresses very well. DeepSee isn't aimed at someone who's trying to figure out what their company ought to be doing in 2010, looking at data that's more than a few days old, or extracting data from existing systems and summarizing it after the fact. DeepSee is addressing a different problem, aimed at the people who are managing a customer support function, for example, and are trying to look at what kind of calls they are getting right now.

DBTA: So end-users of the application provided by an InterSystems partner may not even be aware there's a BI tool running in the background.

GRABSCHEID: Absolutely. That's a classic sort of embedded BI capability. It's really something that's put together by the application developer.

It is real time. What's happening right now. My experience with end users is they're not focused on technologies; they're focused on applications.

DBTA: What industry sectors are you targeting with DeepSee?

GRABSCHEID: Healthcare. It has two different pressures right now. One is they're expected to provide more and more data about quality and outcomes. Here in Massachusetts, there are new laws that require hospitals to report more and more information about the outcomes that patients experience in the hospitals. On the other side, you get the payers trying to pay doctors and hospitals based on performance. The feds are changing the rules for Medicare and Medicaid, to only pay for what they describe for conditions that are present upon presentation. If a patient gets an infection while they're in the hospital, the government is not going to reimburse the problem. At some level, that makes good sense. They want to give the hospitals incentives for controlling hospital-oriented infections.

DBTA: What's an example of DeepSee in action in this sector?

GRABSCHEID: We have a partner, Quadramed, that wanted to tackle issues in the part of applications for hospitals where they register patients. It's actually a complex application because the set of questions they ask depends on why you're there, and depends on who's going to pay. And the payers keep changing the rules about what they're going to pay for and what kind of information you need to collect to support that claims process. This is an area where hospitals are constantly trying to do better. Because they collect a bunch of data, they attempt to verify your eligibility. Typically, in hospitals, by the time they do that, you're no longer sitting in front of them. And then the insurer kicks it back. And they have to go find you and gather a little more data from you; hopefully, you're not in surgery or something like, because then it's going to be difficult to ask questions.

So, if they can make this process faster and work more effectively, they avoid a lot of administrative costs, and they reduce the chances that the claim is going to get denied.

Quadramed has built an application with Ensemble to make it easily tailorable to different hospitals and different payers. They're now using DeepSee to look at why things get rejected and look at where there are bottlenecks in the process to see how they should change the workflow, and how they should train the staff a little differently. ■

