



Achieving Solutions through IT Acquisitions - Is it Really Possible?

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How can a vendor dare claim to have *solutions* for you and your company? The very word seems to be arrogant: as if a purchase of hardware/software can *solve* your business problems. Let's take a look at what it should mean for someone to offer you a *solution*:

Webster defines *solution* as:

1 a : an action or process of solving a problem **b** : an answer to a problem :*specifically* : a set of values of the variables that satisfies an equation

Business today is complicated, and before someone can offer you a *solution*, they better be willing to listen to you and ask key questions to better understand your business and IT environment. Rather than come into your office with a predetermined set of offerings, based usually on what they most commonly sell, a value-added *solution provider* should be spending most of that initial visit asking you questions such as:

1. What do you want to accomplish?
2. What are the key business drivers leading you?
3. What is the real business pain you are working to solve?
4. What are the key factors you use in making a decision?
5. What have you done to date?
6. What budget is committed; what is your time frame?
7. Who in your company is driving this need to make a change?

Only through a thorough understanding of your vision, your needs, and your environment can a value-added *solution provider* truly offer you a proposal that will be meaningful and meet your needs. Other things which will lend credence to a company offering you the right *solution* is their experience working with other companies like yours: in similar industries, or with a similar business need.

For example, many companies today are looking seriously at their ever-rising infrastructure costs, and look to a *solution provider* to put together a plan for a server consolidation. That might necessitate looking at the current hardware environment you have today, and suggesting a way of pooling resources, increasing efficiency, and providing a more stable, secure, and scalable way to do business. Software, too, can play a part in server consolidation. Perhaps, you should consider if Linux would be appropriate as part of your server consolidation in order to dramatically reduce the cost of your web servers of file/print sharing needs. Perhaps you might want to get a better handle on your ever-rising software license costs and better plan for your budget purposes. Perhaps you want some help in monitoring your system resources, transactions and applications, or you would like to automate your software distribution or set up remote system control (e.g. certain Tivoli products may be of interest).

What about your company's need to cut the expenses associated with people flying around to attend training or planning sessions? Would a look at collaborative tools help you accomplish training, work better as a team, and communicate the knowledge resources of your extended team members? To look at the challenges facing a company with these needs, your *solution* might entail some hardware costs, but more likely a focused look at collaboration, meeting, and knowledge-based teaming tools, such as Lotus Sametime or Lotus QuickPlace. Here at Datatrend, we have recently implemented Sametime and have realized huge productivity gains. We can even instant message our key suppliers using this tool.

How about business needs specific to your industry or business process? You might ask the vendor you're working with about their experience in the banking/financial arena, or how they have worked with health care applications, or other manufacturing/distribution companies with whom they have worked. In today's world of leveraging skills and managing dollars, you might find that your *solution provider* has specialties of which they have personal expertise. Many also may offer an extended network of industry or business-process alliances who together as a unified team can drill down with you to the specific application level of your defined needs. Most *solution providers* today choose a combination of specialized skills and alliance partner-based relationships to draw upon, working together with you to define your needs, understand your priorities, and pull in the best resources to help meet those needs.

To illustrate, Datatrend Technologies has been helping companies of all sizes and in all types of industries since 1987. Through the years, we've gone the extra mile to ensure complete customer satisfaction. Our proven track record and vast application experience enable us to take a full service approach in addressing our customers' needs. Our mission is to deliver world class *solutions* based upon the highest performing, most cost effective technologies. We have also forged a number of strategic alliances to complement these primary affiliations. We utilize our strategic alliances to benefit our clients so that we can deliver a fully integrated, end-to-end *solution* that meets individual needs and achieves the given objectives.

Following are some solution areas which might just match those of concern to you in your business today:

Managing large volumes of documents, digital images, or e-mail

Often called *Content or Document Management*: Managing content in an organization is more than organizing, storing, and retrieving important documents and files. It is about helping a business become more *effective*, more *streamlined*, and more *agile* in an increasingly fast-paced, competitive marketplace. Such data or images is often called unstructured data, which is data that is not in a table or database format, like Oracle or DB2, but rather everything else -- the information that is often difficult to identify and manage, such as images, bills, checks, statements or customer documents. Some examples of this unstructured data includes:

- Operational content, such as invoices, reports, scanned images, and faxes
- Electronic documents, such as file attachments of spreadsheets, word processing documents, or presentations, and archiving/managing e-mail
- Rich media, such as audio and video files
- Web content, including HTML and dynamic pages

Managing your website, or making it more efficient

Often called *e-business Management*: Whether you're expanding your internal website, or facilitating the process of real orders and dynamic customer inquiries through your website, chances are you need more than "cool" graphics to appear on your site.

- Are you looking at Portal technologies to better bring together various applications and resources and in turn provide a more collaborative work environment?
- Do you need to ensure your website security, manage various web-based applications, or monitor your website's effectiveness? Companies today have some web presence; but how many are able to show a true business value from their investment?
- Are you looking to transact live business with your suppliers or customers through your website?
- Do you want to reduce the costs of a large call center by having customers access information about their own accounts in a self-service manner?
- Or are you looking at a way to cut high travel costs and time wasted by providing a "virtual" team room, training setup, or collaborative review of a major project? Perhaps you are looking to bring together teams of experts to communicate more effectively through a knowledge portal, or collectively work on a common policy or procedures manual without the expense of traveling to a common site.
- Are you faced with a dwindling workforce and a need to develop Java-based Web services while modernizing legacy assets such as those written in COBOL or PL/1? We work with developer tools designed specifically to help you retrofit and integrate older but still critical software assets, while writing new applications to standards-based and enterprise-tested Java.

Banking and Financial Solutions

Datatrend has worked extensively in the check image, capture, and archiving *solution* area for several years. Working with our alliance partner, Carreker/Check Solutions, we have provided both capture and archive *solutions* for several large midwestern financial institutions. Rather than spend time and money mailing checks around the system and then returning them to a customer, our capture and archive *solutions*, instead, allow a bank to make an image of the front and back side of the check, indexing and archiving the images for ready access by a banking professional or by the customer himself.



Mortgage loan departments face similar workflow hassles as they deal with many pieces of paper and many levels of people who need to review and sign off at different stages of the transaction, finally storing, retrieving, or archiving those documents for a number of years. Through our alliance partner, Lowry Technologies, we can demonstrate how you can streamline that process, involving an automated workflow experience, even incorporating digital images of the property throughout the process.

In the March 2003 META Group White Paper, entitled "Assessing the Value of Content Management for Financial Services, John Brand and Andrew Warzecha evaluate the need for Content Management as they look into the future growth in the Banking and Financial industries. They state,

META Group research predicts that, while business demand for storage continues to be around >90% compound annual growth, the budget for storage is only increasing by around 40%. This requires FSOs [Financial Services Organizations] to apply...data management principles to unstructured information in an effort simply to manage the growth in volume... Much like the adoption of relational databases in the 1980s, enterprise content management (ECM) services will be the enabler for FSOs to better recognize and manage the value of their unstructured information assets over the coming decade. Organizations can expect to achieve both immediate and long-term benefits (i.e. cash flow, strategic, efficiency) with the appropriate application of this emerging technology.

If you are interested in an electronic copy of this White paper, please email me at diane.hage@datatrend.com and I will respond quickly.

SAP Accounts Payable Environment

Need to improve your SAP Accounts Payable environment and increase your A/P Departmental Efficiency? Are you in need of finding a *solution* to eliminate the backlog of unresolved invoices, reduce your cost of invoicing, or streamline your Accounts Payable Operations? Working with our alliance partner, SBI, we can share with you Optura, an SAP-based HR and AP middleware "accelerator" which can help you intelligently route your A/P information to the right people and significantly improve your bottom line.

Analyzing your Storage and Predicting Your Needs

How confident are you that you know what is actually stored on your storage devices? What is the utilization of your current storage environment, and what amount of space is being taken up inappropriately (like mp3 files, duplicate files, outdated information)? With our Storage Infrastructure Analysis, we can quickly show you what is being stored today, and help you manage your future storage needs more effectively.

Even though our server, storage, and software *solutions* are based on IBM technologies, we are experienced in designing and implementing *solutions* involving cross brand technologies. We also work with non-IBM systems and deliver *solutions* that work in today's world, one where there are many environments you have to integrate and assimilate.

Finding a *solution provider* means finding a true consultative partner who will take the time to listen to you, learn what the business issues are, ask about what you've done to date, discuss your challenges, learn what's most important to you, what time frame and budget constraints you're working with, and how you'd like to be involved in the process, in a true partnership fashion.

We at Datatrend take being a *solution provider* very seriously. We are an IBM Premier Business Partner in the PartnerWorld for Software program, a distinction reserved for only the top 5% of IBM Business Partners. In addition, we were honored to receive the *2002 IBM Beacon Award for Best Managing Technology Solution*, which included several IBM software technologies and ISV applications in a complete, end to end *solution*. We are one of IBM's top partners in the Data/Content Management area, and we serve on several national IBM Software Advisory Committees. We are here to help you in your *solution discovery process*, adding true value as your consultative partner, whether it be with the best servers, storage, or software *solution* for your company.

Call or email us today for a truly refreshing discussion from a company that wants to deliver *solutions* built on your needs and helping you solve your business problems.

Datatrend's TrendSetter eNewsletter
April 15, 2003