

Re: Yukon vs Microstrategy

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Good point about Active Views. That definitely can give some good 'ad hoc' power to the Yukon users. This corrects my previous point that Yukon will not have an 'ad hoc' tool for relational reporting. I guess it will soon.

Ad-hoc (Relational vs OLAP)

Although, on a separate note, I believe "Ad hoc" reporting would have to continue going towards OLAP. MDX is the best way business users can use data. Not SQL/ relational.

Even though reporting services (Yukon) is going to come out with a module with OLAP reporting soon, it would still be for people through Visual Studio. Current proclarity/ panorama addins are also just for

VS users. Not for ultimate users. Proclarity/ panorama/ temtec should at some point provide better 'report publishing' from OLAP to Reporting Services. Maybe – with activeviews in place, they will also come

closer to integrating ad hoc OLAP reporting that can cater to published reports. Make it more 'web based'/ user friendly, through their own systems or riding activeviews rather than via VS.

ROLAP (or new MOLAP) as the future of reporting

I envision that with ROLAP becoming more and more feasible (Or new MOLAP modes as jeje pointed out), relational reporting would eventually disappear. It would all be OLAP reporting, but with a combination of – Reporting Services and the Slice/Dice tools.

Maturing Slice/Dice and Integrating with published reporting

In terms of choices of tools, Proclarity , Panorama and Temtec are the only ones that have been worth the investment. Temtec is 'plugin' based but in terms of features/functionality, it's quite matured. The tuple based reporting (asymmetric reporting) that Temtec offers is great. It has a java plug-in (that Nigel once rightly pointed out is

more 'firewall friendly'). The DHTML viewers are a performance killer and that's why people think plug-in are faster. The JavaScript concept that reporting services is bringing in could also become advanced and still be 'firewall friendly'. So again – what I see here is – all the rich functionality of all these OLAP tools slowly folding into reporting services or riding it in some highly integrated fashion. This might be the answer to PTS connection string challenges that Jeje pointed out.

I experimented with proclarity thin client (briefing books) and reporting services reports being called from one another dynamically (through 'actions' in both tools). It was very well received. Rumor has it that Microsoft is soon going to come out with an in-house OLAP tool... probably shortly after Yukon. Might be worth the wait. Despite the criticism I have read in places, I like Reporting Services. I am just waiting for better graphs and layout designing for parameters. The rest of the tool is very good. It's design intensive and has depth. (Cognos ReportNet is only slightly better.)

Security and Architecture

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There are supposed to be major security enhancements in Yukon . The high number of roles was a challenge in AS2000. Yukon offers to take care of that. Also – connection pooling/ scaling. Again removes the challenges that we had with PTS connection string. The custom security API is a great start in Reporting Services. And so is the 'impersonation' in .NET. I have been preparing to architect the security for extranet, intranet as well as for providing access to the suppliers and outlets (god knows with what route the clients final settle on). Enabling Kerberos for multiple 'forests' is also possible with Win2k3. So far, the challenges seem solvable. Last time I had tons of things to resolve because of DMZ and proxy, firewalls etc...Even though I had accomplished it, I felt like rewarding myself with the 'Victoria cross'. This time it seems easier. Although, I hope I am not speaking too soon since I am in the early stages of architecture.

The next piece is: The Portal

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This brings up 'Web Services'. Reporting services has web services – but no java way of using it. But one preferred way is to make SPS portlets and then integrate them into websphere portals. (Not to mention, these slice/dice tools also need web services). Security will be handled using some of things I talked about above. This also takes us into the realms of Knowledge Management. Providing reports/ analysis along side relevant documents – which SPS is great in... and I guess calls for a separate consulting realm.

My conclusion is:

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Microsoft SQL 2005 Yukon is pretty close to taking on the Enterprise

Business Intelligence space. Others can't and will not match since Microsoft will offer everything – at a lower price. And the best part

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Microsoft is going to provide accelerators and frameworks for business processes (for example the 'balanced scorecard framework'). IBM's route has been to provide raw technology and then sell its own consulting service to harness it (by the way, DB2 cube views is too late anyhow). Microsoft is enabling 'people like me' to directly contribute in business processes.

PS

My comment on BobJ was probably too 'harsh'. I apologize for that, quite unprofessional of me in that regards. However, in my experience, Business Objects is only running at places that embraced it early on. New projects definitely consider from Microsoft vs Microstrategy as options. So is the story with Cognos and Brio (why bother?).

The next step:

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- 1.> Financial reporting/ planning. Integration with SAP. These links are only the starting points. Better needs to happen. Writeback capabilities need to improve immensely. User tools to mature in that direction.
- 2.> Data Mining space... still a long way to go for Microsoft on that. The new algorithms are interesting, but business understanding needs to mushroom a bit more. Maybe consider... SAS integration/ collaboration...(???)
- 3.> Database Marketing. Microsoft CRM systems need to integrate with Reporting/ OLAP etc.
- 4.> Supply Chain... don't see no activity here. I have been searching...
- 5.> Microsoft Project Server integration with OLAP. This is a very very interesting development... Have seen good movement there in terms of projects. Would like to see more movement in the newsgroups.

Comments/ questions appreciated. Thanks