

Database platform specialization is the key to success

Mr. Jerry R. Keesee, Vice president for Informix product development at IBM, discussed during his visit in Czech Republic with Computer World about the database market status, development trends and about changes in vendors philosophy.

Q. Do you think, there are some significant changes in database systems currently?

A. In my opinion, a very important trend today is the specialization or focus of platforms on some specific area, which allows then for best answer to customer requirements. As an example, I would mention two main database platforms at IBM - DB2 and Informix, which are developed in parallel, and thanks to its specialization, they almost do not compete with each other, because the first is positioned for use in data warehousing or XML documents processing while the other is more suitable for OLTP (On-Line Transaction Processing) applications requiring fast transaction throughput and high availability features.

Q. What features are considered to be the key ones by customers in their decisions what database platform they use?

A. Of course, customers consider price, but the added value and also the confidence in future will play very important role more and more. We at IBM percept the important stress on overall product concept, its scalability, reliability, power and availability.

Q. How Informix differentiates from its competitors?

A. The Informix database platform is specific by ease of use and administration and by very controllable operational cost. Data replication among various nodes independent on its geographical topology is another strong feature of the product. Informix is based on dynamic scalable multithreaded architecture which utilizes provided resources of underlying hardware and operating system platform. This architecture allowed (besides the other things) to implement multi-tiered high availability solution known as MACH-11.

Q. Do you think, there is a chance, that a completely new database platform can appear in a couple of next years, which would successfully compete with existing ones?

A. Certainly yes, as I told you in the beginning, I see currently big opportunity for specialized databases able to cover specific customer requirements. Nevertheless, current systems will go this way as well.

Q. What new technology do you plan to incorporate into Informix products?

A. Currently we integrate memory database SolidDB, which works as a front-end cache of our database platforms. All requirements for fast transactional access to data are fulfilled on front-end cache side and possible changes in data are replicated asynchronously to back-end repositories which are Informix or DB2. We are working on extension of this functionality as well. Of course, our priority is also the integration

with Cognos and other IBM solutions like Optim and similar. We also plan to extent data warehousing support of Informix products and full autonomy of operation with almost zero administration and unavailability. This way we want to approach customers wishing to build their data warehouses on Informix platform. Our priorities are security, power and scalability, easy administration and reliability of the operation.

Interviewed by Martin Noska