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By Michael Corcoran

Innovative Technology for Innovative

Where do killer applications come from?

Killer apps often make the difference between successful products and those that hit the scrap heap. For instance, Apple introduced one of the first PDAs, the Newton, in the early 1990s. It emphasized electronic note taking and handwriting recognition – and was a tremendous flop. But just 10 years later, *everyone* uses PDAs, both in business and their personal lives.

It's not just a matter of timing. The PDA's success owes a lot to Research In Motion, who recognized the killer application for mobile computing – e-mail – and built its Blackberry device around it.

Meanwhile, Apple redeemed itself through its iPod product line. Portable music players had been around for years, but iPods and the iTunes application changed the way people think of buying and listening to music. iTunes became the killer application for entertainment distribution.

What's the moral of these stories? To be successful, you need more than just breakthrough technology. You need products and applications that help customers do things they could never do before.

Utz

Air Canada

Administaff

Ford

Ace

Pershing

NASA

Commonwealth of Kentucky

Hillman

Customers

Your

Amazing

Our Innovative Technology

Ideas

While we are proud of our R&D team, it is our customers' innovative ideas that make our technology relevant.

Often, the way customers apply a technology determines its success and failure. Information Builders is lucky to have so many innovative customers who do incredible things – and share how they leverage these technologies. Customers, we've devoted this magazine to you.

A Foundation for Success

Information Builders has always been a leading software innovator, but our investments in Web technology – going all the way back to 1994 – helped us pioneer Web-based business intelligence. First, we broke the barriers that the client/server model imposed on production-level, enterprise-wide reporting requirements. Over time, we became the first vendor to merge BI technology with mobile devices, enterprise search engines, geographic information systems, data visualization tools, portable analytics, and dashboards.

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Take **Ace Hardware** (see story on page 6). Ace has done a great job of retaining the convenience and trust of a neighborhood store while staying competitive with hardware superstores – and they do it with innovative uses of Information Builders technology. Unlike many retailers, they use BI for more than back-office merchandising. Ace uses WebFOCUS to share information between stores, among field staff, with vendors, and with corporate users. The company is also getting inventive with portable analytics for its field staff, which is constantly on the move. Nimble use of BI technology keeps Ace

competitive with the superstores while retaining the mom-and-pop culture that has solidified its brand.

Like Ace Hardware, **Utz Quality Foods** wasn't content to confine BI to the back office (see story on page 10). For years, the company has differentiated itself from larger snack food companies by offering fresher products. Knowing that fresh products are a byproduct of fresh information, Utz equipped its truck drivers with mobile intelligence. Now, the company can keep abreast of current promotions, and stock shelves with the products that are selling best, moment to moment. Utz not only found smart ways to leverage BI, it also figured out where the data could have the most impact.

WebFOCUS can deliver remote intelligence effectively because it has a centralized system on the Web that anybody can access easily with a browser – even from a home computer or mobile device.

BI for Consumers

This culture of innovation is spreading to other industries as customers take a more proactive role in managing business information. **Administaff** is a stellar example of this trend. As a Professional Employer Organization, Administaff helps companies manage payroll, employee benefits, workers compensation, and other programs – nearly all of the things that are associated with hiring employees and keeping them on staff. More than 100,000 of these people regularly use WebFOCUS for everything from tracking 401(k) balances to flagging employee birthdays. Providing self-service access to this information translates into huge time savings for Administaff's internal employees.

Innovative Applications Behind the Scenes

In many cases, consumers don't see these BI applications at work. They just enjoy the results.

Air Canada's BI journey began in early 2006 when the airline introduced a program that allows companies to pay in advance for travel credits, then divide them among various departments (see story on page 18). Air Canada wanted to make it easy for the recipients to book, manage, and track flights and flight expenses, as well as to view and analyze travel data. Using WebFOCUS Active Reports technology, Air Canada's customers can now access this data on demand, even when they are offline, and drill down to categories such as types of travel, geography, and time of day. For example, travel managers can determine how much travel is allocated to particular projects, departments and employees, qualifying data according to geography, time of day, and many other variables.

Sometimes an innovative BI application can make the difference between staying in business or closing down. When the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced stringent regulations for tracking pharmaceutical products dispensed in retail pharmacies, **IPC** faced a massive IT challenge that threatened its very existence. IPC rose to the challenge by using iWay Software to make connections among the legacy systems it used to run its business. By creating an open architecture for tracking products, exchanging purchase orders, and monitoring the pharmaceutical inventory in its warehouses, IPC met the FDA's drug pedigree requirements for a fraction of what its peers spent on packaged solutions.

Making the Most of Technology

Many of our customers depend on WebFOCUS to get the most out of their enterprise software.

Pharmascience had heavily invested in SAP software – including SAP R/3 and SAP Business Warehouse – to speed up its manufacturing and order-entry processes. Now, users leverage WebFOCUS to access SAP data from within familiar work environments, and they can create reports in any format. WebFOCUS makes it easy for the IT department to point users to the right information, given its native access to SAP's native data set and application functions. For a company that places a premium on independence and responsiveness, Pharmascience's self-service reporting environment typifies the type of IT system that contributes to productivity and growth.

Of course, public enterprises need BI efficiency, too. The **Commonwealth of Kentucky** uses WebFOCUS to monitor budget expenditures and analyze financial data (see story on page 26). WebFOCUS fosters open collaboration among state employees and increases transparency into fiscal data. Like most state governments, Kentucky must make the most of a limited IT budget. So the state created a centralized BI portal that lets users from multiple agencies track finances online. Kentucky's modern accounting system addresses the management needs of users statewide, and its BI solution delivers up-to-date information about departmental expenditures and revenues, so employees can make fiscally responsible decisions that benefit the public. ●

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Send Us Your Story

We strive to create innovative software products. But until the software is applied in the real world, it doesn't have much lasting value. That's why we're so excited to profile many of your stories here.

If you have an interesting story to tell about how you are using Information Builders technology, send a note to Kathleen Moran (kathleen_moran@informationbuilders.com). She'll arrange a telephone interview and work with your public affairs department to make sure the material is used in a way that is beneficial to your organization.