Are We Ready for Enterprise Search?

Text Analytics and Intelligent Agents cannot be overlooked

By Enrique J. Lenz, President & CEO, MobilVox, Inc.

Mr. Lenz is the President and CEO of MobilVox, Inc. a software engineering company that specializes in advanced cognitive and knowledge management applications.

Enrique J. Lenz

The amount of information generated, distributed and collected by businesses and organizations around the world has been growing at an outstanding pace with annual growth rates exceeding 20 percent and doubling approximately every four years. It is estimated that by the end of 2010, the global Internet will have more than 250 million web sites and about 185 million web servers deployed worldwide.

University of California San Diego (USCD, http://giic.ucsd.edu/) researchers are currently studying the implications of this dramatic growth in digital information. Professor Roger Bohn of UCSD, co-leader of this program stated: "As the costs per byte of creating, storing, and moving data fall, the amounts of data rise exponentially. We know that overall information technology increases productivity and human welfare, but not all information is equally valuable." Another co-leader, Dr. James Short, noted that recent industry studies have reported increasingly larger amounts of information are being produced and stored in networks, companies and homes.

Organization Preparedness

Every day, massive amounts of information are produced in multiple languages, supporting new file types, email servers, web sites, multimedia information, blogs, etc. Organizations need to be prepared to face the information growth by adequately equipping themselves with storage devices, e-discovery software tools, text analytical tools, information sharing, and information security.

Experts in the field believe that organizations need to think about this information growth challenge in a more structured manner and incorporate information planning and processes before deploying enterprise search tools. They argue that effective search systems require file system organization coupled with solid enterprise taxonomies that enable tagging, clustering, knowledge discovery and information sharing. Although this is mandatory for large businesses, small and medium-sized organizations can adopt an enterprise search solution almost immediately.

Enterprise Search Guide

Small and medium-sized businesses and organizations can easily realign their IT processes and start planning for an enterprise search solution. The rigorousness of the solution depends on their need to make information available to employees, customers, and business partners in an effective and timely manner while maximizing productivity and/or profitability. Seven important items to consider when deciding which enterprise search tool is the best fit for your needs are:

1. Identify internal and external organizational requirements. Internally, determine if employees are finding information without spending an excessive amount of time searching for it. Externally, determine whether customers are receiving the information they need to fully benefit from their relationship with your organization. Establish partner communication and information sharing mechanisms that work smoothly with little human intervention.

2. Determine employees, customers and partner needs. Each class of users has different requirements. Technical employees may need quick access to project related reports while business development employees may need access to product features, newly released information and new product timelines. Customers and partners may want timely access to the organization's publicly released documents.

3. Budget your enterprise search solution. Use of the enterprise search solution will require a commitment from all levels of the organization. It will also require financial analysis related to hardware infrastructure, software licensing and IT resources.

4. Evaluate alternative solutions. There are a number of enterprise search tools available in today's market. Create a matrix of possible vendors and weigh them against your requirements and your budget constraints. Make sure that you consider the following evaluation criteria:

- The ability to search all repositories of information – It is imperative to be able to find the information wherever it is stored. At a minimum, the solution must allow users to search their desktop and email as well as anywhere else where specific connectors are required.

- Ease of use –The solution offers products that are very easy to install, use and maintain without a steep learning curve for the end user or for your IT administrator.

- Security – The solution must match your internal security requirements with those of employees, customers and partners.

- Intelligence – Information retrieval systems that learn from their users are able to provide more precise search results than traditional search tools. Organizations learn from the usage of the system and use the feedback to make it more valuable.

- Information sharing – The ability to share findings between your employees, customers and

The IRIS Search Suite

The IRIS Search Suite is composed of Network IRIS and Desktop IRIS. This enterprise search solution was designed for small and medium-sized businesses and organizations looking for an inexpensive solution that addresses their core enterprise search requirements. The overall objective of the IRIS Suite is to enable employees, customers and business partners to find the right information when they need it. Furthermore, both tools are equipped with textual analytical tools to easily filter through search results to derive actionable intelligence.

The IRIS Suite offers the following capabilities:

- **Easy installation, configuration and deployment:** Both products have been engineered with ease-of-use in mind. Desktop IRIS can be downloaded, installed and configured in a matter of minutes. Any IT employee can quickly set up Network IRIS. Most importantly, both products are seamlessly integrated, which allows entering search criteria only once to find information anywhere on the network and desktop. The tools offer no limitation in the number of repositories or the number of files to index, as opposed to other enterprise search solutions.
- **Categorized tree pane visualization:** This feature allows a user to identify categories and quickly find the desired information. This feature is unique and allows the user not only to quickly find information, but also to guide you to the directory structure where similar documents are stored.
- **Intelligent agent components**: They provide statistics and document summarization, statistical and grammatical analysis.
- **Download websites:** This feature allows for the downloading and automatic indexing of websites, which can be searched even when offline.
- **Security:** The system has the ability to mirror a pre-existing security model, allowing administrators to set up groups and control access to secure information based on user roles and responsibilities.
- **Information sharing:** You can upload information into your network from any location and immediately share the data with other employees, customers and business partners.

For more information visit http://www.irissearch.net

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partners is critical to the success of any organization.

- World Wide Web – The ability to automatically download content from targeted websites related to the search criteria enhances the organization's collection of external data. The organization must provide mechanisms for other users to access that information.

5. Obtain a software evaluation version of your top choices. After deciding which enterprise search solutions may satisfy your organizational needs, it is important to evaluate their software. Your IT administrator should select at least three products for comparative analysis and evaluation.

6. Compare requirements to products. Prepare a test plan based on your enterprise search requirements and test against the evaluated products. Create a comparative matrix of vendors' product features and weigh them against your requirements and budget constraints. It is very beneficial to include the level of customer support provided for the product in the evaluation matrix. Users should be mindful that vendors who are unwilling to provide adequate support during the evaluation process are unlikely to provide adequate support for the product when fully deployed.

7. Make your selection. After evaluating your alternative enterprise search solutions, make the selection based on the analysis and then negotiate your software licensing agreement and support terms. Have your IT administrator prepare a

deployment plan for the selected product in three phases:

- Phase I: Re-examine network data organization and security access. Reorganize directories, delete duplicates and develop taxonomies that will serve the business objectives and satisfy different classes of users. Develop guidelines and processes for adding, removing, updating and sharing data with interested parties.
- Phase II: Strategically select information repositories most critically important to the organization. Deploy the enterprise search solution with these core repositories. Scale up initial roll-out by adding more repositories and connectors to other legacy systems.
- Phase III: Monitor the enterprise search solution on a regular basis and seek feedback from the user perspective. Aggressively demand additional features from your vendor. If your vendor is not responsive and the selected solution does not meet your expectations, do not hesitate to select a product from another vendor.

Conclusion

It is critical to implement an enterprise search solution to meet the growing information needs of your business. The solution must be able to adapt to your organization's needs and transform significant amounts of information into actionable intelligence. However, do not overlook the fact that these tools only work on the content that your organization has generated. Businesses should not deprive themselves from gathering massive amounts of unstructured data related to their organization's objectives; on the contrary, they should motivate their employees, partners and customers to contribute to the information gathering process and let the enterprise search tools do the rest. This will not only improve employee productivity and reduce costs but it will also enhance customer satisfaction and strengthen business partnerships.■