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Schussel Sees Database Architecture As Key Issue

TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA, 1998 APR 21 (NB) -- By Grant Buckler, Newsbytes. Enterprise architectures in the coming years will be multi- tiered, based on messaging not transaction processing, and built on software components, according to George Schussel, chairman of Digital Consulting Inc. In this environment, choosing the right database architecture will be critical, Schussel said at the Database and Client/Server World conference sponsored by his Andover, Massachusetts- based company.

Many people don't understand database architecture issues or care about them, Schussel said, but "by not paying attention to this area, you're going to get into trouble."

The reason is that there are several different approaches to dealing with both relational and object-oriented database capabilities, and which one is most suitable depends on what you are doing, he said.

Schussel broke database vendors into four groups. The first are offering true universal servers, combining object and relational capabilities around a relational core but not supporting all the features of true object orientation. The main examples are Informix and IBM, he said. Oracle Corp. is in a separate group, Schussel said, because while "Oracle's marketing department has introduced a universal server," what the company offers is really a relational DBMS with five complex embedded data types added to it. "What you're dealing with is a middleware solution," Schussel maintained, and that is inherently slower.

Oracle's software is midway between the Informix-IBM model and what Sybase and Microsoft are doing, which is based on the idea of having multiple specialized servers linked by middleware. This is all very well as long as you don't want to join relational and object data, said Schussel.

The final category is true object-oriented databases like those from Ontos and Versant and Computer Associates' Jasmine. These are not really databases at all by a strict definition, said Schussel -- they are "extended memory stores for applications" -- but "there's nothing wrong with that as long as you have a clear idea of what a database is and what a database isn't."

In his opening keynote address, Schussel also said that while the idea of software components began to be talked about seriously some 10 years ago, "it's had I would say less impact on software development across the board then most adherents thought." However, he forecast that components will play a significant role, with the market dividing between models built around rivals Sun Microsystems with Java and Microsoft with ActiveX.

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