

DATABASE

TRENDS AND APPLICATIONS

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Magic Information Systems Chooses Pervasive Software's SQL Database

By Walt Jordan

Magic Information Systems has been creating database applications since 1989. Originally called Hartronix, a value-added reseller, the company created a management package for wholesale distribution and light manufacturing called Accountware. Over time, the Accountware application grew to generate 80 percent of the overall business. As a result, the company was confronted with the challenges of keeping the product current and viable in a changing IT environment.

When Accountware (www.accountware.net) was first developed, the company used Btrieve as its underlying database. At that time, Btrieve was offered by SoftCraft, a company founded by the founders of Pervasive Software (www.pervasive.com) "Btrieve was a very solid, robust ISAM product," said Isaac Rapoport, president of Magic Information Systems. "We tried dBase and others, but at 10,000 records and up, it started crashing all the time."

SoftCraft was ultimately purchased by Novell, which helped Accountware's growth. The application was written in C and had several unique features at the time, including the

ability to support multiple currencies, landed costs tracking and others. And though it was originally geared to Windows, the company ported it to Unix and other platforms as well.

But new challenges accompanied the success. "It was a good product, but maintaining it and customizing it was a headache," Rapoport said. "We began looking for a tool that would let us get away from the 800,000 lines of code that we had written in C."

That proved to be a tricky process. The company began looking for a 4GL rapid application development tool such as Power Builder. Unfortunately, Rapoport said, most of the tools his team looked at would only work with SQL relational products. "They had ODBC but they would not touch Btrieve in those days," he said.

Then Rapoport came across an application development tool, now called eDeveloper, from Magic Software (www.magic-software.com), an Israeli company, popular in Europe and Asia. "Not only did it work with all the relational databases, it also worked with Btrieve," Rapoport said. As he began to explore the use of the Magic RAD tool, Pervasive came out with its SQL line. At first, Pervasive had Btrieve run as a

parallel transactional application with the SQL relational database. Now, Btrieve is embedded into Pervasive's SQL database.

That combination solved Rapoport's problems. "With Pervasive wrapping Btrieve in a relational database and Magic as the rapid application development tool, we found that we really didn't need to go any further," Rapoport said.

In fact, using Pervasive SQL as the database provided Magic Information System (www.magic-info.com) with a competitive edge. The database requires no administration. "Our clients are mainly smaller and mid-sized companies with sales ranging from \$5 million to \$100 million," Rapoport noted. "They are not likely to take on a \$65,000-a-year guy to balance and tune the database. They need something that they can just turn on and go. And if the power fails or the network cable goes, they can shut it off and bring it back up."

Pervasive SQL 2000, Rapoport said, "certainly cuts the mustard. It is lightweight; it is fast; its memory footprint is not too heavy. It is an excellent choice from every respect." Those typical sites may have from five to 70 users; Rapoport says that he cannot recall ever

having to invest much time or energy tuning the database. And neither have his clients.

The Magic RAD tool is database independent. All the reporting is generated by Crystal Reports Writer from Seagate. "That is our operating environment, and Pervasive is at the core," Rapoport said.

Interestingly, customers are becoming more interested in what is the underlying database. "Microsoft SQL has made enough noise that customers understand that there is an SQL database underneath," Rapoport said. "But they still rely on the vendor to make the choice. And we assure them that they will never have to make another choice."

Furthermore, the majority of Rapoport's competitors also use the Pervasive database, after using a proprietary product for many years. "Every time an operating system moved ahead, their systems would fall apart and nobody liked that," Rapoport said.

Rapoport has also made a significant commitment to Magic Software. His company has become a Magic Software solutions provider and has been renamed Magic Information Systems. Accountware has been renamed eWholesaler.