

Dump The Data Warehouse Dream



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DUMP THE DATA WAREHOUSE DREAM

This thought piece is designed to help the business and the IT department stay abreast of market trends and get the most out of their investment in technology.

DATA WAREHOUSE

Sounds like a great idea, doesn't it? All your data in one place; one version of the truth; a single point of integration for all your Business Intelligence needs.

But some of our clients have started to ditch their data warehouse projects. Why? There's every chance you'll end up with a rubbish dump rather than the slick and modern warehouse you're imagining.

These are the problems that clients are running into:

- It isn't possible to create a data warehouse without a comprehensive and coherent view of your entire data management architecture. It's not just a warehouse, it's an entire supply chain that you need to engineer. Marrying new tech with legacy tech is difficult
- The IT skill sets that are required to architect, build and maintain a data warehouse are ones your current IT team isn't expert in. And they're expensive especially when you have to contract them in.
- Most of your existing data isn't in good shape. The time/cost to clean and transform it so it's suitable for use is non-trivial
- Latency. By the time originating systems have collected data, passed it to the warehouse, it has been calculated and drawn to your attention, the moment in which the insight is valuable is often lost
- Ongoing costs are significant. You will need to maintain and secure the physical infrastructure of servers in your data centre and to cope with changing data formats, new/more data, fixing broken connections, new feature requests, evolving technologies

- The opportunities for using integrated data aren't as numerous or as valuable as was thought. The data mining discovery that nappies and beer sales were correlated turned out to be an urban myth.

In short, there's a lot more to it than people expect. The consequence of this is that it's a lot more expensive than originally envisaged and takes a lot longer. And then there's a lot less benefit than people had assumed. The business case falls down.

SO WHAT SHOULD YOU DO INSTEAD?

- Concentrate on getting best-of-breed systems that do their core job well
- Don't try to stretch systems to include things that they were not originally designed for. Specifically for smart networks, that means not trying to stretch SCADA systems that were designed for industrial process control to include network management. In spite of some commonality, they're fundamentally different things
- Ensure or improve the accuracy and reliability of the data that each system contains before thinking about bringing the data from those systems together
- Insist on APIs that enable access to the information that these systems capture, use and store
- Only integrate data where you know why you're doing that and what business value can be obtained from it

In short, the advice would seem to be: buy silver bullets, don't invest in a white elephant.