

DATABASE

TRENDS AND APPLICATIONS

Solutions for the Information Project Team • www.dbta.com

Volume 21, Number 4 • April 2007

QL2 Delivers Critical Unstructured Data in Real-Time

Collecting data from inside and outside the firewall

QL2 Software's data extraction tools and solutions deliver business critical data seamlessly and in real-time. Its technology integrates unstructured data from the Web with structured enterprise systems in order to connect customer, partner, competitor and other external web sites to extract and integrate data that is useful to businesses but had not been available for analytics. QL2 functionality is offered as a packaged solution and as a hosted service. DBTA talked to QL2's Co-President and CTO Greg Lauckhart, about the company's strategy and new technology.

DBTA: For people who are not familiar with QL2, what kinds of solutions do you offer?

Lauckhart: We are in the unstructured data management and real-time BI space. We have a strong "outside-the-firewall" focus both in terms of where we deliver our solutions--you can use our technology inside the firewall or as a service--and in terms of the data we integrate.

DBTA: What is a typical use case?

Lauckhart: A company may have a set of partners and want to establish a connection but may not have the IT channels open with the partner, or the partners are too slow in reacting. They can use our technology to go to a public source for the information they need.

DBTA: What do you mean specifically?

Lauckhart: Take an order placement procedure. Maybe an airline wants their fares available to an online travel agency (OTA). The OTA could use our technology to gather the airfare information and display it on a Web site and once a user selects a flight, the OTA can post the selection to the airline's Web site. There is no backend connectivity. The airline doesn't have to provide the OTA any special infrastructure. The OTA runs everything through the airline's front-end. That kind of example is applicable in retail or other transactional activities.

DBTA: What would be a real-time application?

Lauckhart: With the Web, there is much more information available to your customers and consumers. They can get comparative pricing and get news items about your brand. Monitoring competitive pricing and the business landscape, monitoring consumer sentiment, and alerting on events are huge applications for our technology. We can instrument all of the interfaces that you normally used to do manually.

DBTA: Generally speaking, are organizations that bring you in doing this kind of work manually?

Lauckhart: They are doing it manually or they are doing spot checks. They don't do it rigorously and miss a lot of what is going on. So they may have systems that will give them good suggestions about where to move their pricing, but to utilize an automated system you need a good data source available. A lot of people are ready to take the next step in analytics but they need the data to put in. You can use WebQL to gather a vast amount of data, load it into a data warehouse and then do whatever kind of analytics you like.

DBTA: What is the enabling technology that allows you to do this?

Lauckhart: Our core technology, WebQL, is a virtual database for which we have augmented SQL in such a way that you can use URLs in place of tables and chain complex logic paths together to facilitate complicated network navigation and data extraction.

DBTA: You offer the technology both as a customizable application and a hosted service. Who generally opts for which?

Lauckhart: It depends upon an organization wants to work with us. Often times, an organization will install WebQL locally and learn the WebQL lan-

guage. There are a number of deployment options inside the firewall. Or they can deal with us as a service provider and we can give them the data on a real-time or batch basis, based on their requirements.

DBTA: What does your technology roadmap look like?

Lauckhart: We are adding more robust Javascript support. And in WebQL, people deliver a lot of dirty data depending on the source where it is collected. We are adding algorithmic routines for normalizing and validating data. That will be a big feature set. We are also adding unstructured text manipulation technologies--text classification and entity and fact extraction. We can linguistically analyze text and classify them.

DBTA: With whom do you compete?

Lauckhart: It is a fragmented space. We have competitors but they focus on niche roles and don't provide a platform to build solutions.

DBTA: What challenges do you face?

Lauckhart: Businesses are becoming aware that there is a lot of data that they are not leveraging. One of our biggest challenges is communicating that they can leverage that information. Our approach is unique and has a lot to offer the world.

CONTACT INFORMATION



QL2 Software, Inc.
316 Occidental Ave. S., Suite 410
Seattle, WA 98104
sales@QL2.com • www.QL2.com
Phone: +1.206.443.6836
Toll Free: 800.750.8830
Fax: +1.206.269.0694