dir systèmes

Analyzes and improves data warehouses with ER/Studio and DBArtisan

Overview

Based in Rivière de Loup, Quebec (Canada), dir systèmes is a consultancy specializing in business intelligence solutions for the industrial and manufacturing sectors. Its principal, Manon Tremblay, is a long-time user of database modeling and administration tools since her days working as an IT specialist for a Quebec-based pulp and paper company. As an independent consultant, she continues to utilize ER/Studio Data Architect and DBArtisan to provide data modeling and analysis, as well as data warehousing administration for her growing customer base.

Challenge

When working with clients, Tremblay says her first order of the day is to explain the role of data modeling in developing data warehouses for business intelligence (BI) solutions. "Many organizations aren't used to it, so will call me in when they're starting a major project. The first thing I tell them is they need to model their data so they can view it, extract it, and use it. In many cases, the IT department has no idea where to start."

She explains that most IT departments tend to think in terms of transactional data. "Business intelligence requires a completely different type of database. Without the right data modeling solution, you're simply generating reports and not getting the full benefits of your business intelligence."

APPLICATIONS

- Business intelligence solutions consulting for industrial and manufacturing sectors

TOOLS USED

- ER/Studio Data Architect
- DBArtisan

Solution

When she started her consultancy she says, "The first thing I did was call for a license. I couldn't live without it."

Tremblay uses ER/Studio Data Architect as her data modeling and data architecture tool of choice. "I like it because it makes it easy for me to get a global look at the relationships within the internal data structure. Once I have done that, I use it to reverse engineer databases to meet their data warehousing needs."

With ER/Studio, Tremblay says she can generate models in Excel tables so customers can create tables in their own systems. "ER/Studio is also a great tool. I really like to use it to find domain names for attributes and other information quickly. I also like the macro functions."

Another plus is the visual interface. "It's great because I can explain things to clients visually, which is much easier for them to understand and very nice for me. I can even put some information inside tables for reference. The ability to report in HTML in particular makes it very easy to produce professional-level documentation."

Another key tool for Tremblay is DBArtisan. It enables her to connect to almost any native database to troubleshoot any data problems.

"You want to get your eyes inside that database before you model," Tremblay explains. "So when I start a project I use DBArtisan to look inside the database. It allows me to easily connect to the customer's data, whether it's Microsoft SQL or whatever other database they may be using."

She particularly likes the navigation features of DBArtisan. "I don't need to always use my keyboard. I can right-click to select from tables, sort them, and execute. I don't have to write down attributes because it knows the sequences."

Overall, Tremblay says she appreciates the ease of use of these database products. "I can manage the work on my own without having to interrupt the client's operations."

CHALLENGES

- Inappropiate data modeling for business intelligence needs

- Lack of in-house experience in data warehouse structuring

- Need for visibility into native databases to troubleshoot data quality issues

Results

Tremblay says ER/Studio not only saves time on data warehousing projects, she can also easily generate high-level documentation and reports for clients - complete with models - once the project is completed. "It helps me immensely in discovering the structure of the transactional database, allowing me to build a new data warehouse with the same terms. With the data dictionary I can easily find information and create attributes for tables without having to engage IT personnel at the site. Simply put, it's a very efficient product that helps me save time."

She adds that DBArtisan's ease of use and visibility across multiple data sources makes it much easier to identify any data quality or other issues. "It's a very helpful and efficient tool because that helps me examine data relationships and generate information more quickly. For me, it's DBArtisan all the way."

RESULTS

- Reduced time for implementing data warehousing projects

- Improved data quality and ease of access

- Easy connectivity to client database prior to modeling

"I like [ER/Studio] because it makes it easy for me to get a global look at the relationships within the internal data structure."

Manon Tremblay, IT Consultant