

Migrate or Integrate?

Search Accelerates SharePoint 2010 Roll-out

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There's an old adage in IT that "nothing ever goes away." Retiring legacy systems is a painful, often expensive process. Every system has some useful information in it, but it's hard to distinguish jewels from junk. There are times when migrating all your content and cutting over to a shiny new system is the right thing to do, and there are many strong content migration products on the market. Sometimes, however, a total migration is simply not necessary *nor* useful.

I'm a hopeless book hound, and in my life have spent more on books than on cars. I have thousands of books. The last time we moved, we had 60 boxes of books, and my wife made me a proposition: We would unpack the five boxes that contained the books we knew we wanted, and leave the rest in the basement for two years. Over the next two years, I opened a few more boxes and pulled out what I needed. At the end of the two years we donated the rest to the local library. Needless to say, our bookshelves were much more organized, and had a lot less junk.

When it comes to managing and migrating your enterprise information, you can take the same approach. With the right planning and the proper tools, accessing your legacy information can be performed far more efficiently than my "open a box in the basement" approach.

Enterprise search is a technology that is all about breaking down "information silos." According to recent surveys, the average organization using SharePoint has less than 20% of its enterprise content actually stored in SharePoint. This means that for most organizations, searching for information across multiple systems is simply a fact of life. But by taking a more unified approach to information access—with search that indexes and securely surfaces legacy content from across all of your enterprise systems using a single engine—you can provide accessibility to information without the pain and cost of a comprehensive migration.

Resist "All or Nothing" Migration

User adoption is the key to a successful SharePoint 2010 deployment, and the fear of upsetting users and management often

results in the "all or nothing" migration mentality. IT pros often feel compelled to migrate all content into SharePoint from legacy systems because they fear they will miss critical content if they attempt to "cherry pick." The problem with the "all or nothing" migration approach is that it is the most complex of all possible options. Not only is IT faced with the often daunting challenge of trying to emulate legacy system functionality within SharePoint, but legacy data needs to be migrated in its entirety, and tagged with appropriate metadata—which is often complex and not easily translatable from the legacy system's organizational structure.

Take a file system, for example. Content in a file system is often organized and classified by folder names and folder hierarchies. SharePoint was designed to (among other things) make the "file system approach" to categorization obsolete. In SharePoint, each top-level folder in a file system would ideally be mapped to a SharePoint Document Library. Each sub-folder would then be represented as a metadata column describing the content residing therein. It's fair to say that all of us will confess to having gone sub-folder crazy at one point or another in our attempts to classify content using file systems. Attempting to duplicate this antiquated method of classification in SharePoint is problematic, to say the least.

Pondering the varieties of content that we have, and the option of migrating from legacy systems into SharePoint, it's easy to see how, despite best intentions, IT pros are potentially hurting adoption and productivity by taking a pristine SharePoint deployment and trying to recreate the organizational structure from the legacy system.

Search Avoids Migration Headaches

The term "enterprise search" describes technologies that were specifically designed to connect to disparate repositories and securely surface their content. Search technology empowers IT pros with more discretion and choice when it comes to what to migrate, when to migrate and how to migrate. What makes this a win-win is that search is

embedded in SharePoint already, and most organizations intend on deploying it.

In a phased approach, IT starts with a pristine SharePoint 2010 deployment and moves content that users have identified as being absolutely critical to them. Smaller quantities of data enable IT to really focus on organizing it in SharePoint correctly. IT then deploys search and indexes content stored in legacy systems. This valuable content is readily available to users when they need it. Users are introduced to a "clean" SharePoint deployment and really see SharePoint in the best possible light, but still have immediate access to the legacy data they need. In fact, users can often find the content they are looking for more quickly through search than attempting to browse to it in the other system. This also applies to content stored in your SharePoint 2007 that hasn't made its way to SharePoint 2010 just yet.

This approach provides several benefits. First of all, SharePoint is deployed much faster than it otherwise would be because IT isn't in a holding pattern waiting for all of the content to be migrated. Second, users are immediately exposed to virtues of SharePoint at work, as they use and benefit from one of SharePoint's most powerful features: search. Third, SharePoint will be much less cluttered with content that will likely never be used.

Microsoft Enterprise Search—Best of Breed

According to leading analyst firm Gartner, Microsoft now provides best-in-class search technology out-of-the-box with both SharePoint 2010 and FAST Search Server for SharePoint. To supplement these search technologies—whether it be to extend their search capabilities or to optimize them for specific industries and verticals—Microsoft relies upon its ecosystem of ISVs and system integration partners.

One such partner is BA Insight, which offers a collection of connectors that extend the power of FAST and SharePoint Search across a variety of ERP, ECM, CRM and messaging enterprise systems—while ensuring adherence to all legacy permissions and security models. With these connectors, organizations can unify and integrate information access across all of their enterprise systems, and approach the migration question in a more deliberate and strategic manner. ■

BA Insight is a leading provider of integrated search technologies that help organizations leverage the full power of Microsoft SharePoint and FAST Search across the enterprise. BA Insight's flagship Longitude Search and Longitude Connector products let organizations extend Microsoft's enterprise search capabilities across dozens of CRM, ERP, ECM, messaging and collaboration systems, and delivers rich document preview and assembly tools that empower knowledge workers to act upon search results with greater speed and effectiveness.