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zData Perspectives
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Evaluating DB2 Tool Vendors

Although the most important aspect of DB2 tool selection is functionality and the way it satisfies your organization's needs, the nature and stability of the vendor that provides the product is also important. Consider these questions as you evaluate DB2 tool vendors:

1. How long has the vendor been in business? How long has the vendor been supplying DB2 tools?

2. Does your company have other tools from this vendor? How satisfied are the users of those tools?

3. Are other organizations satisfied with the tool you are selecting? Obtain a list of other organizations that use the same tool and contact several of them.

4. Does the vendor provide a 24-hour support number? If not, what are its hours of operation? Does the vendor have a toll-free number? If not, how far

away is the company from your site? You want to avoid accumulating long-distance charges when you are requesting customer support from a vendor.

5. Does the vendor provide Web support? The Web support should be in addition to phone support, not a replacement.

6. Evaluate the response of the technical support number. Call the number with technical questions at least four times throughout the day: before 8 a.m., around noon, just before 5 p.m., and again after 9 p.m. These are the times when you could find problems with the level of support provided by the vendor. Was the phone busy? Were you put on hold? If so, for how long? When you got a response, was it accurate and friendly? Did the person who answered the phone have enough technical knowledge to be useful?

7. How knowledgeable are the technical support representatives who answer your test calls? Do they know their products inside and out, or do they struggle? Do they know DB2 well (such as a former DBA) or are they unseasoned?

8. Will the vendor answer DB2 questions free of charge in addition to questions about its product? Sometimes vendors will, but they don't advertise the fact. Try it out by calling the technical support number.

9. Does the vendor provide a newsletter? How technical is it? Does it provide information on DB2 and the vendor's tools or just on the vendor's tools?

10. Does this vendor supply other DB2 tools your organization might need later? If so, are they functionally integrated with this one? Does the vendor supply a full suite of DB2 products or just a few?

11. Does the vendor integrate its tools with other tools? For example, can a product that analyzes databases to determine whether a REORG is required integrate with your shop's job scheduler?

12. Does the vendor provide training? Is it onsite training? DB2 training and product training?

13. Are installation, technical, and user manuals provided free of charge? Are the manuals available in both hard and soft copy? Will the vendor deliver additional documentation or error-resolution information by overnight mail?

14. How are software fixes provided? Electronically? By tape? On the Web? Is a complete reinstallation required? Are fixes typically accomplished using

zaps? Does the vendor support SMP/E?

15. How many man hours, on a short notice, is the vendor willing to spend to solve problems? Is there a guaranteed time limit?

16. Is the vendor willing to send a representative to your site to do a tailored product presentation? How knowledgeable is the rep?

17. Is the vendor an IBM business partner? How soon will the vendor's tools be modified to support new DB2 releases and versions? Does the vendor participate in IBM's Early Ship Program (ESP) for new DB2 versions and releases?

18. Have the vendor's tools been recently reviewed or highlighted in industry publications? If so, read the articles.

19. Will the vendor assist in developing a cost justification? Most tool vendors are more than willing to provide cost justification to help you sell upper management on the need for the tool.

20. Does the vendor provide sample JCL to run its product? Can any needed JCL be automatically generated by the product? Are templates provided to tweak the JCL to your shop standards?

21. Does the vendor charge an upgrade fee when the processor is upgraded? How flexible are the contract terms and conditions?

22. What guarantees are available from the vendor against it being sold or going out of business? Will the vendor supply the source code for the tool, or perhaps offer a money-back guarantee?

23. Is the vendor willing to set a ceiling for increases in annual maintenance charges?

24. Does the vendor supply DBA tools for other DBMSes used at your shop? Can the same tool, using the same interface, be used to manage multiple databases across multiple operating systems?

25. How does the vendor rank enhancement requests?

26. What is the status of the vendor? Have recent business down turns resulted in lower market share? If so, what is the company doing to regain its position?

27. Did the company recently undergo a layoff? What is the retention rate of their development and support staff?

28. Are there any outstanding lawsuits? Have recent events resulted in downsizing? What are their plans to reverse this trend?

Use these questions to provide a basis for evaluating DB2 tool vendors. You can judge for yourself which criteria are most important to your organization.

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