

Problem Too Complicated for Simple Arithmetic

I would like to correct an error that was presented in the "DB2: An Objective View" column in the July 1991 issue of *370/390 Data Base Management*. A letter from Bob Zastrow was published that attempted to explain storage allocation for DB2 VSAM data sets. Based on some simple arithmetic, the author concluded that 11 4K pages should fit on a 3380 track, and 13 4K pages should fit on a 3390 track. He then (correctly) stated that in actuality 10 pages fit on a 3380 track and 12 on a 3390 track, but incorrectly assumed that "...IBM is reserving the extra page for DB2's future use."

A physical track is composed of user data cells. For 3390s, there can be either 1,729 or 1,749 cells per track. Due to the physical composition of the device, there is wasted space in between records (sometimes referred to as inter-record gaps). This is where the "missing" space is, not in a hidden page allocated for DB2's future use.

Given the above, it can be seen that calculating the number of pages/track is not as simple as dividing the total bytes per track by the page size. To correctly arrive at the number of pages that can fit on a track, you must consult the appropriate IBM DASD manuals. The *IBM 3390 Direct Access Storage Reference Summary* (GX26-4577) provides charts that detail the number of records that can fit on a track based on the characteristics of the data set being stored. DB2 data sets can be described as having equal length physical records of 4,096 bytes without keys. Using the tables in Zastrow's article, a 3390 can fit 12 records/track using 87.6 percent of the space. A 3380 device can fit 10 records/track using 90.0 percent of the space.

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A NATURAL Solution

As product manager for NATURAL and SOFTWARE AG's change management product, PREDICT Application

Control, I found Scott Ferrell's article in your August issue, "Change Management in the NATURAL Environment" misleading to your readers. Scott referred to SYSMAIN, a NATURAL utility, as a change management tool.

SYSMAIN is an online and batch utility designed to identify and transfer NATURAL objects between environments. SOFTWARE AG in no way endorses the use of SYSMAIN as a complete change management solution. SYSMAIN may be viewed as a component of a change management solution utility for moving NATURAL objects only.

The sample checklist Scott provided is a good sample of some important considerations when evaluating change management products for the NATURAL environment. However, I would like to add a "big picture" perspective to his list of issues. SOFTWARE AG recognizes that there are other components that make up a complete application (e.g., JCL). We recommend that SOFTWARE AG customers interested in acquiring a total change management solution consider tools that support all application objects; whether they are supported by one product or through relationships between various vendors' products.

SOFTWARE AG is in business to provide solutions. I applaud Scott's efforts to educate our customers and initiate dialogue about our solutions.

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Spin Control Is Common Knowledge

After reading Rob Mattison's column "Quests, Tests and Pests" in the July 1991 issue of *370/390 Data Base Management*, I found myself asking why belabor the obvious with a whole column, when the last paragraph would have sufficed?

Historically, vendors in every discipline cast their products or goods in the light that will best sell them, hence the origin of the phrase, caveat emptor, which warns innocents of the realities of the marketplace.

Unbiased surveys are the exception rather than the rule unless there is clear independence between the vendor and the evaluator (i.e., the ACM, or, in general commerce, *Consumers Reports*). The vendor-touted survey need not, in itself, be distorted; the bias can come from the process of selecting which survey data (or subsets) will be reported. How many samples of five doctors were polled before XYZ Pharmaceutical Company found the one group where four doctors agreed on the efficacy of their brand of aspirin?

The use of benchmarks in marketing is another exercise in "spin control." What marketer would choose among benchmarks the one that presented her/his product in less than the most-glowing light? The best benchmark is the one closest to the actual intended use (i.e., the buyer's real application).

The need to define the use of function the product will need to support before defining the measures holds true whether selecting a DBMS or a sports car.

That's our job; not to rail against the manipulations and distortions of the marketplace, but to understand our real product needs, define them and their measurements criteria (transaction speed, flexibility, storage space, cost, ease-of-use,

"I need to downsize. They said they could help. But then they said I had to get all new PCs. They said their database wasn't compatible with my mainframe DBMS. They even said I would need to re-write all my applications.

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