Looking for All the Wrong Answers in All the Right Places: Is Christie Brinkley an Enterprise Model?

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It was a Thursday afternoon and I was looking for an enterprise model. Specifically, I was searching for various models of how an enterprise business was organized. Using a common Internet search engine I tapped in the words and waited for the hits. I got 8,600. The first entry was a full color picture of Christie Brinkley.

I smiled. She was definitely a model, and one could make a good case she was definitely enterprising. She also wasn't alone, joined by Claudia Shiffer and several other very shapely ladies. Eventually, my system administrator inquired, rather tersely, why I was accessing such a site. I tried to explain and I tried to tie my explanation to the inefficiencies of searching Cyberspace for information - but it was a tough sell.

Today, information technology on our desks presents us with many opportunities. However, this is a double-edged sword. All these opportunities mean lots of decisions, complicated by the means with which we choose to execute them. In short, technology has given us freedom only to the extent that we can master it.

Like a child in a candy store, when professionals -- whose job it is to work with information-- are faced with a gut of data we quickly become overwhelmed and disoriented. In an effort to manage this information, we build systems using manual procedures or computers to assist us in this task. Shortly after, the operation and maintenance of these systems can dominate much of our time instead of the original task. What we really need is intelligent data and information channels.

Intelligent data are packets of data in which a behavior is native; which when invoked can identify itself and the context in which it should be used. That is, the data itself will distinguish between an enterprising model like Christie Brinkley and a business enterprise model.

Intelligent data can be objects, like those underlying a Windows® desktop. Today people that work with a Windows desktop are unaware of the object technology (OLE, DCOM) underneath. That's how it should be. People should be able to operate on the desktop using familiar metaphors transparent to their implementation.

So if we take electronic documents and add some behavior that informs the potential user of a particular field of application we have created something I call SmartEntities© or SmartObjects©. These SmartEntities would be in a variety of the classes such as SmartDocuments© and Agents. Given a distributed environment

such as the Internet these SmartObjects© could be queried in a more useful fashion limited the false hits currently experienced today.

In this theoretical example, objects are asked to respond to the inquiry only if they match both the keyword search criteria and the context. Thus unless the document or Christie herself was discussing about models of an enterprise in this context, the smart object would not respond. Still another example would be similar to M. Tannerbaum's agents. These fragments of cyber-life would be asked to search for data sifted by context to find the information desired. These personalized cyber-researchers could be tethered to a location or given a temporal existence (chronological or conditional lifespan), or allowed to roam free left open to evolve similar to V'ger in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. Something else that could help eliminate Christie from searches is the concept of an information channel.

Consider a channel to be similar to its distant cousin: TV or radio broadcasting. A channel could be used to filter and collate information related to just one context, kind of like the Sports, News, or Comedy channels on cable TV. With a predefined context, an Internet or intranet user could "tune-in" to a channel and be assured that only information in that same context would be in the flow.

For example, a progressive aerospace corporation may use an intranet to publish huge amounts of information needed by a slew of different departments. With an effective partitioning strategy, these constantly changing data streams could be focused into information flows that more closely match a user's context. That means a shop floor worker could switch to the production channel to see and search for schedule, routing and production change data, then switch to the engineering channel for product definition and other design data. After tapping into these streams of information, the engineer may then switch to the company, division or department channels to see the latest news. Couple this technology with video broadcast on demand and you know have the ability to distribute training as needed.

Thus channels become these invisible streams throughout the organization delivering information to people's fingertips in an easy, convenient, efficient and dynamic form.

There's no doubt that the Web is a powerful ally. But Web browsers need a sort of virtual card catalogue to help them improve efficient access to information and sort business models from other types of models - keeping system administrators off our backs and preventing the need for somewhat awkward explanations.

Originally Published in Desktop Engineering August 1997