Touching Base

Sybase is Alive and Growing

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When Mark Twain read his own obituary, which had been mistakenly published in a newspaper, he quipped, "The report of my death has been greatly exaggerated." John Chen, the chairman, CEO and president of Sybase used the same line to reflect the comment Oracle's Larry Ellison made recently in an interview in Playboy magazine, where he opined that Sybase had "died" two years ago.

Chen delivered his own cheerful assessment of Sybase's continued vitality during his keynote address to Sybase TechWave 2002 in San Diego last month. Over 2,000 Sybase faithful were in attendance during the five-day user group conference. Chen noted that the increased number of sponsors and partners at this year's confab was a good indication that Ellison's observations were "off the mark."

Some other facts refute Ellison's assertions as well. Founded in 1984, Sybase currently has 4,310 employees in 60 countries. Ninety five of the Fortune 100 enterprise use Sybase products. More than half of Wall Street transactions are done with Sybase systems and technology, and Sybase is the leading mobile and wireless solution provider with 68 percent market share. Sybase's total revenue in 2001 was $926.1 million.

During Chen's keynote presentation, he announced a strategic alliance with PeopleSoft. Craig Conway, PeopleSoft's president and CEO detailed the benefits of the new relationship. PeopleSoft's CRM and ERP solutions will leverage Sybase's integration products and database management systems helping to deploy and speed up access to mission-critical information. Acknowledging Sybase's strong penetration in the financial sector, the new partnership would put Sybase's Adaptive Server Enterprise on par with Oracle, IBM and Microsoft databases within PeopleSoft customer sites. Conway indicated that having access to PeopleSoft's CRM or ERP applications is great news for Sybase customers. Additionally, PeopleSoft will now include Sybase's Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) products in their Integration Architecture. The two companies currently share 700 customers throughout the world.

In an exclusive interview, SGI's James Tuleya, strategic alliance manager for Sybase, defined the theme for this year's TechWave 2002. "Everything Works Better When Everything Works Together." SGI is another company that was prematurely pronounced dead a couple of years ago. It has marked its 20th anniversary with substantial growth in sales in its government and defense sectors and in its graphics business. It has also launched a shared SAN filesystem solution. Noting that Sybase and SGI complement each other in a range of industry sectors, Tuleya stressed that the "best of breed" philosophy of both companies helps information managers "harness the data explosion" currently underway.

Sybase's "best of breed" strategy has been particularly successful within the financial and telecommunications communities. Wall Street institutions represent approximately 35 percent of Sybase's business. During an exclusive meeting at the conference, Dr. Raj Nathan, senior vice president and general manager of Sybase's Enterprise Solutions Division addressed total cost of ownership (TCO) questions surrounding databases and their associated applications. As evidence of Sybase's focus on lowering TCO, PowerBuilder 9.0 Beta was released during the conference. This rapid application development (RAD) tool supports XML, Java Server Pages (JSP) and third-party application servers, and provides developers with ability to build for and deploy into, multi-architectural environments including distributed, Web and client server. This version of Sybase's RAD tool will become generally available in the first half of 2003. For more info on the beta program, go to www.dbta.com/demo_central.html.

Dr. Nathan concluded that Sybase is committed to their traditional database business and will continue to provide self management and lower TCO while offering "best of breed" technology support and addressing new trends like XML and Linux. Commenting on Sybase's recent sales success in China at Oracle's expense, Dr. Nathan stated, "Oracle has paid the price. Oracle is now the hunted animal." Sybase's demise surely does appear to have been an exaggeration.

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