

Why Oracle is not hopping on to the 'iHOP' success of Customer Data Hub?

Naeem Hashmi, August 13, 2004
Chief Research Officer, Information Frameworks

What triggered me to write this note? The Agenda for the American Oracle User Group Annual Conference.

In January 2004, responding to SAP Master Data Management initiative, Oracle announced its Customer Data Hub (CDH). Now Oracle claims that CDH is eliminating customer data fragmentation. Oracle showcased their customer IHOP as a great CDH success. But after all this time and great success, no one really knows the real story behind the CDH? Why Oracle is not HOPPING on to the IHOP's success bus? Interesting question!

I have search all publicly available material on the subject, have approached Oracle Analyst, PR, and Product contacts to truly understand what is the state of CDH but I have no luck thus far.

There are interesting white paper and impressive analyst quotes at the Oracle CDH web site (http://www.oracle.com/data_hub/cdh.html) but beyond that, there is nothing much other than whitepapers.

Interestingly enough --- today, I got published agenda for the American Oracle User Group (AOUG) annual conferees scheduled for Sept 12-15, 2004 in Orlando, USA. I got excited. Perhaps, I will see a lot of coverage of this Oracle highly visible initiative in this user conference. Then I searched through my fine tooth comb to see if someone will talk or discussion on CDH either from Oracle, or a Customer, Vendors or Analysts. But I was disappointed. My excitement vanished. The Customer Data Hub, the most important Oracle initiative launched this year is absent in the AOUG agenda. I found only one CDH reference in D&B session.

What happened? Is there a change in the CDH strategy? Or simply 'hopping' around a customer data hub yields no significant business value without a complete 'reference data' that includes, entities such as Products, Financial, Content and Organizational data integration in addition to 'Customer' data alone and also if applications have visibility to such hubs during run-time.

The success of 'logically-managed-unified-reference' product and/or service adds value to the corporate bottom line only if the business applications are 'instrumented' to seek out such services at run time. And that is a huge undertaking. Without this, the CDH is nothing more than a Customer Data Mart or Customer Operational Data Store for customer reporting and analysis regardless of Oracle, SAP or Seibel.

SAP is good example. Since when SAP launched its Master Data Management (MDM) initiative (<http://www.sap.com/solutions/netweaver/masterdata/index.asp>), SAP began to 'instrument' its solutions to exploit MDM services that hook business processes and applications to use consistent master (financial, material and customer) data. Note that SAP MDM is still in its ramp-up program and needs work for prime time usage. Moreover, the success of SAP MDM also depends on how quickly SAP customer jump on to the NetWeaver bandwagon. However, SAP has been very vocal and visual in talking, presenting and demonstrating the MDM capabilities. (SAP NetWeaver is SAP's 'Integrated-Business-Technology platform for adaptable and collaborative business solutions.

SAP MDM also had very bumpy road, and I expect the same for Oracle CDH. SAP has been quite active in promoting its MDM and demonstrating its capabilities to their customers and IT media at just about all SAP and SAP users' events regardless of how little or robust capabilities present in their solution. At least SAP customers are talking about it. However, I was surprised that neither Oracle nor Oracle customers had a single session dedicated to Oracle CDH at their AOUG annual conference. Oracle should be 'hopping' on to IHOP's success if they want to spread the message of its value proposition.

Siebel Universal Customer Master (UCM) (<http://www.siebel.com/crm/ucm>) is also quite mature solution to address customer's data challenges. Siebel, being a CRM company, their focus is very much limited to the 'Customer'. However, like any enterprise operations, there is a lot more reference content present in business processes to deal with than only a 'unified' customer. How extensible Seibel UCM is to accommodate complex product, financial and organizational reference data still Siebel and their customers, are using and talking openly.

So to me Oracle CDH is still a mystery. Hope to learn more about it soon!

Disclaimer

These observations are as of today (August 13, 2004) and will change anytime.

Naeem Hashmi,
Chief Research Officer
Information Frameworks.
<http://infoframeworks.com>
e-mail: nhashmi@infoframeworks.com

**INFORMATION
FRAMEWORKS**