

AardWolf White Papers

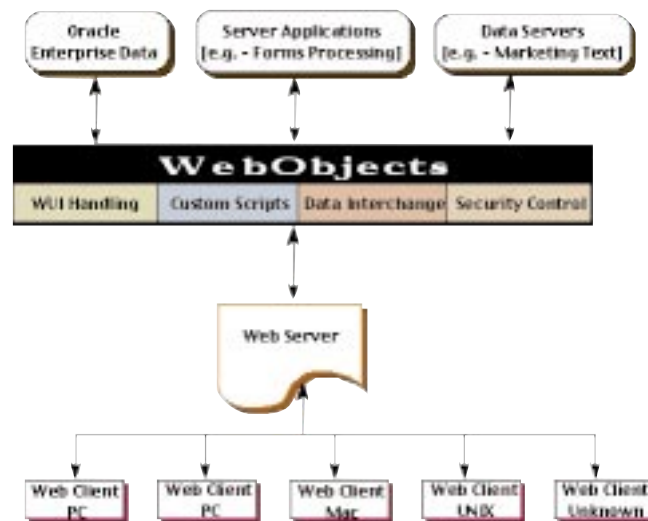


STRATEGIES FOR A CHANGING WORLD

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Handling the Supply Line: from processing at the Data Warehouse to the End Client.

Situational Basis: Firms need to leverage their existing data warehouses to provide increased value to supported clients, both internally and externally. WebObjects, a centralized web resources management and delivery package allows IT departments to provide advanced services to their web clients, by allowing access to enterprise data and server applications while controlling the WUI and access to server processes.



The web has been a chaotic assembly of data, sometime useless and often plagued with poor delivery in content and format. Large firms attempting to build a corporate interface to the web frequently suffer from mismatched resources and data, poorly defined goals in web orientation, and a lack of support options for remote workers attempting to access corporate processes. The marketing manager wants marketing materials on the web, the president wants to be able to pull reports from the road, the sales department wants to enter orders remotely, and the IT department wants to give everyone what they need, but are troubled by requirements and methods of standardizing to make end-user support a realistic goal.

A single unified method for supporting both employees in the field and outside clients' needs must be approached and tackled. By standardizing the interaction to a single base level (html, with Java support) with advanced capabilities for manipulating and accessing enterprise data, applications and processes, a single clear path can be created to satisfy a myriad of demands. This is the trend within the industry, driven by need and supported by logical conclusion. WebObjects supports this requirements and provides the capabilities to handle standardization with varying capabilities for different types and levels of users, while not upsetting the existing data storage methodologies. We see WebObjects as an a forerunner in this trend, a sample of the capabilities and needs fulfillment required to engineer the total support framework in a virtual workplace.

WebObjects [WO] is a centralized web resources management and delivery package which allows IT departments to quickly and cost effectively provide advanced services to their web clients. WebObjects isn't the web server, it isn't the enterprise data or SQL server, it isn't the file server; it is the glue that ties them all together in a unified manner for interaction with clients on the web. WebObjects allows the web user interface (WUI) and user processes to be controlled through a combination of creation of custom interfaces and programmed scripting via ANSI C/C++, Object C, Java and various other scripting methods. It supports bidirectional ties into existing Oracle, Informix, and Sybase enterprise databases, allowing approved user access to corporate data, data entry and reporting. It provides methods for interaction with client-server applications, allowing access to server applications running under Windows NT, UNIX and most mainframes, creating support for home-based and traveling employees.

WebObjects, running on either the http server or on a separate machine, provides these capabilities to the web through any http server which provides a NSAPI, ISAPI or CGI interface, including servers from Microsoft, Apache and Netscape, running on NT or specific Unix flavors (HP-UX, OpenStep Mach , Solaris). A new version (4.0) was released September 1st, 1998 and adds support for G3 PowerPC's running Mac OS X Server.

The move to a controlled standard for interface which can be accessed globally (intranet, internet) is beneficial to corporations in cost analysis of employee training, user support and employees transit (freeing employees from having to return to the office to engage in productive work). There are also tangible and non-tangible benefits in the implementation of the virtual office where location isn't a primary consideration to productivity. The decision then rests on whether to implement WebObjects or select an alternative pathway to the same generalized destination. WebObjects is a rock-stable framework, which provides the capability to start implementation today, and it's total capabilities are unmatched by any other package available.

WebObjects is designed as a distributed architecture, which permits you to scale WO to your needs. It is fully Y2k compliant, although custom C programming written for it by your employees or vendors may encounter the Y2038C/C++ issue. Costs range between \$7,500 and \$50,000 for high performance server licensing, with developer kits costing \$1,499 per developer, inclusive of licensing for deploying a limited performance server. Aggregate and real world costs to implement should be expected to be between \$50,000 and \$4,000,000 inclusive of labor and required hardware, with an implementation time of six months two years, depending on the need for training and the complexity of the clients' needs. A trained WebObjects specialist should be able to get a moderate complexity site up within a month or two. Although outside vendors are available to set-up and maintain your WO capabilities, we strongly urge clients to insure that the skill set remains within their organization.

The dangers involved in a transition is finding staffing sufficiently familiar with WebObjects. Expect to have hire and train employees to support the implementation, and then have to maintain high incentives to retain them once they are trained to avoid them being lured away. We suggest that you take existing employees familiar with C++ or Java, as well as html and at least one enterprise database you use. and have them trained to handle the implementation and ongoing development once the system is in place.

The actual implementation, unlike many others, will not require you to take down your enterprise systems in order to activate it. WebObjects is proven technology used by Global 2000 firms and government agencies, including MCI, BellSouth, D.O.D, Adobe, HP, Standard & Poor's, the BBC and USPS, to mention a few. It is used in roles from electronic commerce to remote access and control of internal applications (such as Corporate Dashboard for PeopleSoft), from sales tracking and forecasting to electronic product delivery.

With the advent of the network computer (NC) and browser-integrated operating systems by 2002, having major portions of your firm's user support processes streamlined to html and Java will enable you transit to a less costly computing structure, with reduced real-world costs while increasing benefit to end users. Additionally, object oriented web programming provides capabilities of stable transition to other frameworks, should WebObject's extensibility and power be insufficient.

WebObjects is an enabler framework which supports several emerging trends, including content-centric browser-based applications folded into the WUI (Web User Interface), and support for the virtual office for traveling and remote users.

Bottom line: The direction of corporate computing will evolve to support platform and location independent enterprise computing and its' capabilities via a standardized interface. WebObjects allows this direction to be pursued today, using robust multiplatform software which enables controllable web access to enterprise databases and applications without requiring your enterprise systems be taken down to support the implementation, while maintaining an open architecture to handle future changes in standards.