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NEWS & ANALYSIS

## Handy Appliance

### COUNT NETEZZA AMONG THE NEW BREED OF INNOVATIVE BI SOLUTION PROVIDERS

While the merits of real-time BI are still debated, innovation continues and customers are responding. Ascential Software Corp. and similar vendors have built on the traditional batch-load model by enabling more frequent loads to a data warehouse or mart. Newer-comers are breaking the bonds of tradition and introducing new ways of delivering intelligence faster. Apama, for instance, caches frequently used queries and monitors the data stream to have answers ready each time one of those queries is posed.

Also notable among those breaking the mold is Netezza, which recently introduced its first product: the Netezza Performance Server 8000 series (NPS 8000). This BI appliance is a rack-mountable box using off-the-shelf components and is designed to speed up data loads and query performance on very large data sets while carrying a lower price than is typical for BI systems.

Part of Netezza's low-price strategy is to use an open-source database and operating system in its box. But its secret architecture turns its cheap parts into a screaming fast data-churning engine. Sounds too good to be true? Industry analyst and *Intelligent Enterprise* contributing editor Philip Russom says, "Netezza already has three reference customers. So someone has confidence in it."

One of those reference customers is marketing services

provider Epsilon. Chief operating officer Bryan Kennedy was wary of the promise as well: "When we first looked at the numbers [Netezza's benchmark results], we were, frankly, skeptical." But testing it with his own large data sets convinced him it was a good deal. Kennedy already has IBM SP2 machines in place, among others, and he says that his NPS 8100 outperformed SP2, with a lower cost to boot. Epsilon is not yet serving any of its marketing intelligence customers with a Netezza appliance.

Kennedy is pleased with the ease of integrating BI tools into a Netezza environment, and Epsilon uses many different ones because tool selection is up to its customers. However, he says he'd like to see the NPS access other databases, such as Oracle and DB2, in their native formats rather than through the more generic ANSI SQL standard.

Russom would like to see more competitors along with Netezza in the multiterabyte space. Right now, Netezza faces only Unisys' BI Program and the Sybase and Sun partnership. "Users would benefit from the competition among vendors, which would lead to lower prices, accelerated technology advances, and greater diversity of approach," Russom says.

— Jeanette Burriesci

