# L E ▼ E R A G E

The Future of IT

Companies are growing cautious about IT costs, stability and longevity

Concerns about the economy, as well as the growing diversification of technologies, appear to have lowered expectations in IT spending into the next year.

A recent study from Forrester Research polled CIOs on their IT budgets, which revealed that while there was an increase in IT spending in 2005 over 2004, the outlook for 2006 was less encouraging.

Citing the economy, the CIOs polled indicated that while they do not generally anticipate spending cuts, they expect IT spending to level out through the rest of the year and into the next.
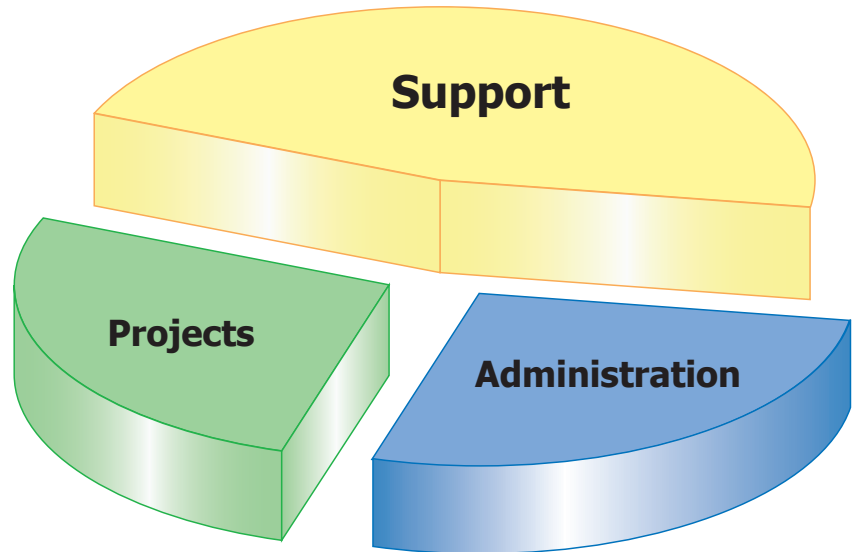
The IT Ecosystem: Uniting Projects, Support and Customers

Capitol Federal invests in Tracker's ability to unite and drive processes

While there may be a growing sense of caution about the future of IT investments, many organizations realize the dangers of not moving forward.

Capitol Federal, a savings and loan holding company with headquarters in Topeka, Kansas, was one of them. Their project and time reporting was processed through a legacy mainframe system with a text-based interface. Their support processes, on the other hand, were driven through a separate Notes database, while their sales and purchasing processes were largely manual and paper-driven.

Faced with increasing maintenance costs and growing demands on the limited functionality of their existing systems, Capitol Federal searched for solutions.

Automation Centre's newest release, Tracker Suite 7.0 for Lotus Notes (www.TrackerSuite.com), was one of the applications they considered, as it would provide a familiar interface to

Adventures in the Paperwork Jungle

see all the Bizco cartoons at www.Acentre.com/cartoons

Even Efficiency has its Limits

Tracker generates reports organizations can use to manage budgets and resources more effectively

Tracker and IT

Also, in a sector where almost every year there seems to be a technology marketed as an "industry shaping" product, a popular concern is the future stability and support of a solution. Potential IT investors are putting their proverbial thumbs to the wind, to see if it is blowing towards Windows or open source, .NET or J2EE.

A False Economy

However, in reducing their IT spending, organizations risk losing productivity and increasing costs.

A recent study by Accenture surveyed 300 CIOs in regards to their organization's IT spending. The study revealed a sharp difference in performance depending on the health of their IT budget.

Organizations which invested in developing and implementing new systems to answer their needs tended to perform significantly better than organizations which under invested in IT to reduce costs.

The reason? Organizations which reduced spending were often left committing time and resources to maintaining legacy systems and struggling to integrate them with newer systems.

Where Tracker Fits

Automation Centre's products, the newly released Tracker Suite 7.0 for Lotus Notes (www.TrackerSuite.com) and TrackerOffice 2.4 for MS Outlook (www.TrackerOffice.com) leverage the organization's messaging platform to provide low cost solutions with a quickly realized ROI through painless deployment and rapid adoption. In addition, Tracker products can help consolidate existing database servers, reducing maintenance costs.

3M, a Tracker Suite customer, consolidated its data systems from 75 databases on 10 servers, handling 3,500 files, to 5 databases on 2 servers handling 5,000 files. This move has streamlined management, improved communication across groups, and dramatically reduced their overhead costs.

Tracker's flexible structure also allows customers to fully capitalize on their investment. As well as providing an immediate solution for IT organizations, Tracker can be rolled into driving product development, marketing and customer services.

Serving Technology Standards

Automation Centre's technology strategy in product development is the use

What are the recommendations for backup and maintenance of the DataWarehouse?

Backup methodologies are too complex to discuss here in complete detail. However, here are a few recommendations:

SQL Server 7 and 2000 both have Maintenance Plan Configuration Wizards. For more information on these, please refer to either the online help in SQL Server or the documentation that came with your SQL Server software. Run the configuration wizard (normally by selecting Tools>Database Maintenance Planner menu option) and set up the following:

1. Select the master database as well as the TAC_Datawarehouse database, unless you have already set up the backup for the master database.

2. Select "Reorganize Data and Index Pages" and "Remove Unused Space from Database Files". Modify the schedule if desired.

3. Select "Check the Database Integrity" and set checks to run

of the most pervasive standards least likely to change, including HTML, SQL: 99 and SQL: 2003, XML, CSS, SOAP, UDDI and LDAP/DirXML. This strategy ensures the stability of Tracker products now and in the future. The Lotus Notes / Domino platform itself, which Tracker Suite is based on, offers extensive support for the latest standards.

What's more, Automation Centre's core technology involves the production of text, an approach which provides an incredible amount of flexibility. Tracker not only runs on a Domino or IIS platform but even from a file share. This text can also run on a J2EE server such as WebSphere.❖

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before database backups. Modify the schedule if desired.

4. Select "Backup the Database" as part of the maintenance plan and verify the integrity of the backup when complete. Modify the schedule if desired. Modify the target location of the backup, either to a disk or to tape.

5. Select "Backup the Transaction Log" as part of the maintenance plan, select a target location and verify the integrity of the backup. Modify the schedule if desired.

6. Select how you want to write the history of the maintenance plan, either to a local or remote server.

7. Give the plan an intuitive name and click "Finish."

The plan can be modified later by using SQL Enterprise Manager.❖

their Notes users.

Initially, Capitol Federal was strictly interested in replacing their mainframe for project management and time reporting. However, when they realized that Tracker Suite's modules not only streamlined processes, but also integrated with each other, they saw an even greater opportunity.

An IT Ecosystem

While there are many solutions for project management, time reporting, help desk services or personnel management, Tracker Suite 7.0 is the only one to successfully integrate these different systems within a single framework. For example:

A lead can be cultivated in Prospect Tracker, then converted to a new profile within Customer Tracker with the click of a button.

Tracker's Web Portal interface allows the new customer to log onto the organization's website to create a support request for a service issue within Support Tracker.

The organization's IT department, deciding that the service issue would make a good product enhancement, converts the support ticket into a new task within their Project Tracker product development database.

Moving Forward

Capitol Federal realized they needed more than just new project and time applications, they needed new practices as well. In Tracker Suite's integrated modules, they found both. As well as Tracker Suite's Project Tracker and Time Tracker, Capitol Federal also licensed Personnel Tracker, Prospect Tracker, Support Tracker, the Tracker DataWarehouse and Purchase Tracker.

Capitol Federal now anticipates an increase in project productivity, improved reporting and accuracy in time and purchasing, streamlined support services and increased customer retention through the framework provided by Tracker Suite.❖

Managing Tasks with Dependencies in Tracker Suite

One of the new features of Tracker Suite's Project Tracker is the ability to manipulate task dependencies. Task dependencies allow users to build project task sequences as well as to determine task start and due dates. Users are provided with tools to help enhance project planning and scheduling by creating tasks that are dependent upon other tasks' start dates and duration. Tasks are updated automatically as relevant information changes. There are also summary tasks which depend upon completion of sets of sub tasks. Summary tasks' start and due dates are calculated using information from their sub tasks.

To see the task dependency mechanism in action, first create a list of tasks either manually by utilizing a "New\ Task" action from the Project Files actions menu, or automatically by pressing "Action\Load Processes" (this will load pre-defined process documents
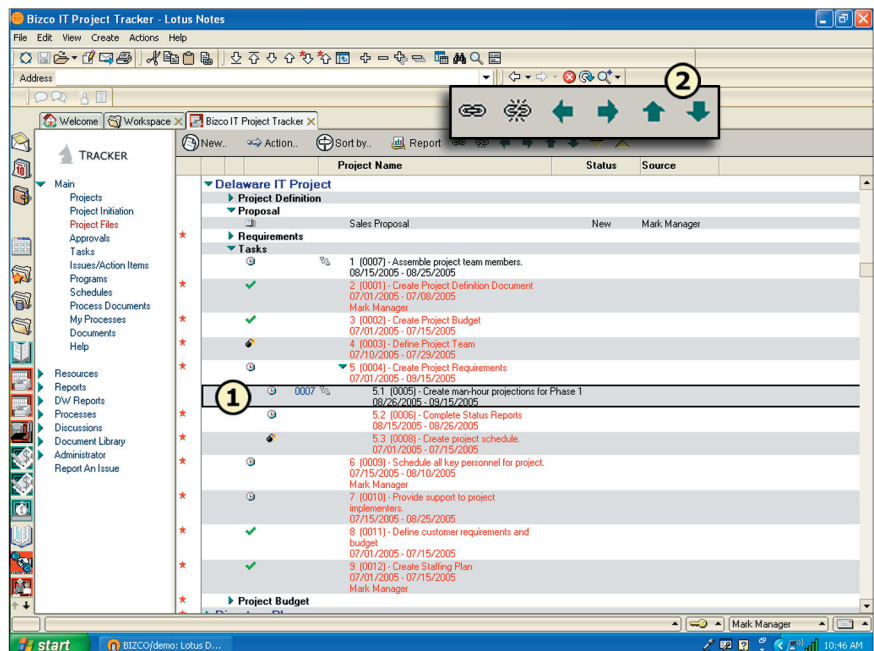
Figure 1: Task indenting. The icons next to each task refer to its status: "Checkmark "- task is completed, "Clock" - task is awaiting completion, "Bomb" - task is overdue

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into a project) or "Action\Import" which will import a list of tasks from Microsoft Project. If you have chosen to import tasks from Microsoft Project, you will get a set of tasks with displayed dependencies as Project Tracker is able to distinguish dependencies at the time of import (See Fig. 1, page 3).

The tasks in the list now appear with the WBS number preceding a task name. A WBS number corresponds to the Microsoft Project's WBS outline value. Task documents still contain a task code, which is used to display successor/predecessor information. For example, in Figure 1, the task with WBS 5.1 ("Create man-hour projections for Phase 1"), has task code 0007 to the left. This means this task is preceded by another task with code 0007, which in this case is the task with WBS 1 ("Assemble project team members").

Operations on Tasks

The following operations can be performed on tasks: link/unlink, indent/outdent, and move up/down. The icons that are used to perform these operations now appear with the rest of the action items in the actions menu of the Project Files view (see Fig. 1, #2).

Figure 2 demonstrates the results of linking tasks with WBS numbers 6 and 7. Notice the change in the start and due dates of task 7, the new link icons next to both tasks indicating their relationship, and also task code 0009 now appearing next to task 7 (Fig. 2, #1). 0009 is an indicator that task 6 (which has task code 0009) is a predecessor of task 7. The start date of task 7 is now 08/11/05 – a change from 07/15/05, which indicates that the task 7 will start right after the task 6 is finished.

Indenting a task with WBS number 9 will result in the following display (see Fig. 2, #2). Notice the new outline numbering indicating a parent/child relationship between tasks 8 and 8.1. Project Tracker supports multiple levels of task indentation: children of tasks can have their own dependents.
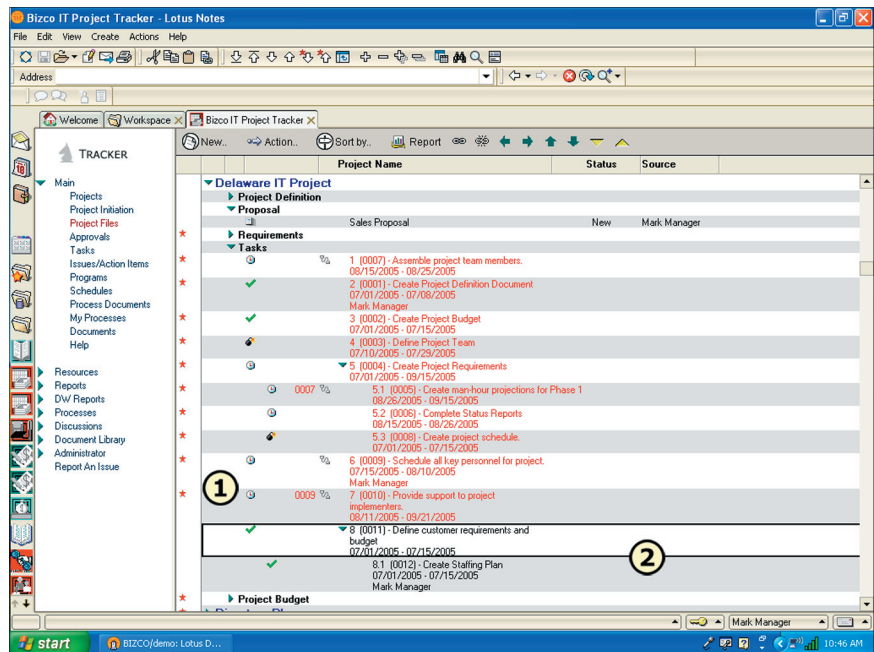
Outdenting a task with WBS number

Figure 2: Managing task dependencies

5.3 will result in the following display (see Fig. 3, #1). Notice the new outline numbering for all tasks, the fact that the task that used to be numbered 5.3 is now 6 and that it does not appear as a child of task 5.

Task start and due dates will also change based on manual task update. If,

for example, the due date of task 7 had changed, both the start and due dates of task 8 would be updated as a result. The number of days skipped depends on the number of calendar days the due date of task 7 was extended or reduced as well as any holidays or weekends profiled for the company as days off. ❖
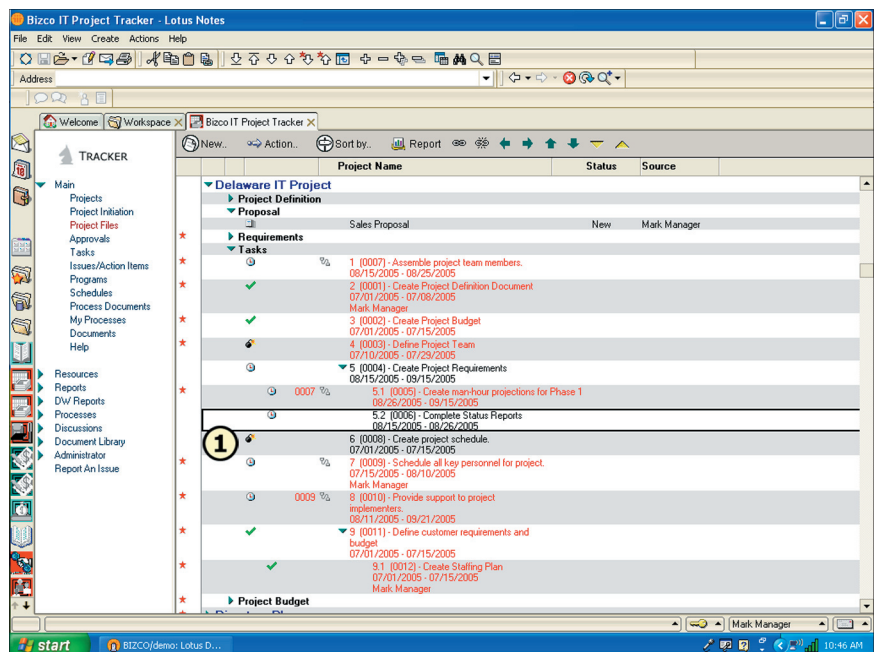

Figure 3: Outdenting tasks