The Present and Future of Informix in the SAP world

An interview with Janet Perna, General Manager Data Management Solutions for the IBM Software Group, and Karl-Heinz Hess, Member of the Extended Executive Board at SAP

As global leaders in information technology, IBM and SAP have strengthened their relationship through a mutual dedication to the Informix platform. With the acquisition of Informix by IBM in 2001, the two companies continue to provide the level of commitment and customer support that Informix users around the world have come to expect.

Informix significantly increases IBM´s presence in the data management market.
The company´s Data Management division holds more than twice as many patents as its closest competitor, giving IBM a powerful advantage. More than 40 million users at 300,000 companies worldwide utilize IBM data management solutions.

SAP has augmented its product portfolio over the last few years by introducing the leading e-business platform, mySAP.com. SAP has more than 44,500 installations in over 120 countries, with more than 2,000 installations on Informix.

Janet Perna, General Manager Data Management Solutions for the IBM Software Group, and Karl-Heinz Hess, Member of the Extended Executive Board at SAP, recently responded to questions that directly affect Informix customers.

■ Mrs. Perna, why has IBM acquired Informix?

Perna: IBM and Informix share common values for excellence in technology and customer service, and a focus on customer satisfaction. With the Informix acquisition, IBM strengthened its position in the distributed database market by increasing its ability to attract an even larger community of application and service providers.
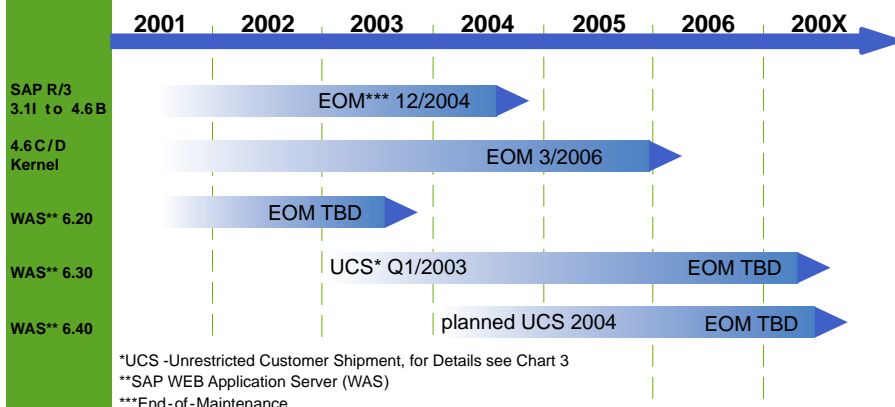
■ Will IBM and SAP continue their commitment to Informix?

Perna: IBM has a strong track record of servicing and enhancing the products that customers need. Just as we have had a successful 30-year history supporting the IMS database, we will stand behind the IDS product line as long as customers require it. There will be no forced migration to other technologies. IBM will support IDS as long as SAP does, now and into the future.

Chart 1 — SAP´s Release Roadmap for IDS 9.3x

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	200X
SAP R/3 3.1I to 4.6 B		EOM*** 12/2004					
4.6 C / D Kernel			EOM 3/2006				
WAS 6.20**		EOM TBD					
WAS 6.30**			UCS* Q1/2003			EOM TBD	
WAS 6.40**				planned UCS 2004		EOM TBD	

*UCS -Unrestricted Customer Shipment, for Details see Chart 3
**SAP WEB Application Server (WAS)
***End-of-Maintenance

Hess: SAP has supported Informix since 1992 and continues to have a strong commitment to the platform. The joint SAP and IBM Informix development and support team works hard to satisfy our customers and we are keeping this group in place. Users value Informix and we are gratified that IBM is preserving this technology. We will support the current versions of IDS on SAP 4.6C at least until 2006. We've designed a roadmap related to Informix as a database platform showing that IDS 9.30 will also be certified for the upcoming SAP Web Application Server – WAS for short – 6.30 and 6.40. As you can see, SAP and IBM are working together to develop and expand Informix capabilities.

■ What is IBM doing to ensure that Informix remains a competitive technology

Perna: We are making a significant investment to ensure customer satisfaction for the long term. IBM recognizes the value of Informix customers, and we do not take their business for granted. Over the past year, IBM has improved the quality, reliability, and scalability of Informix across all platforms. Today, we are working on IDS to make it even more reliable and enlarge its capabilities for all future releases. As a measure of our commitment, we have more developers working on IDS today than before the acquisition. IDS 9.30 was the first release after IBM bought Informix. When it was delivered in September 2001, we clearly demonstrated our intention to continue developing this technology. We plan to deliver IDS 9.40 in the first half of 2003, and we are in the process of defining the features of IDS 9.50 and 9.60. Customers can

expect a new IDS release every 18 months. IBM will also keep supporting Informix on all major operating systems including AIX, Solaris, HP-UX, Windows, and Linux.

■ How is SAP meeting the different requirements of the Informix customer base?

Hess: SAP users have formed special interest groups for Informix that are providing valuable feedback on customer requirements and future product plans and direction. We listen to what they are telling us. Based on IBM's commitment to Informix, SAP has laid out plans for IDS in a roadmap. The SAP and IBM Informix team will keep delivering the finest data management technology.
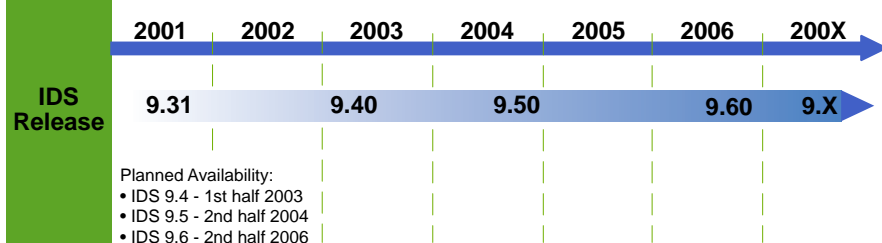
■ Would you please describe SAP's strategy for the Informix database?

Hess: We have comprehensive plans for Informix products, and we are in the process of communicating them to our worldwide customer base. The key points are full support of SAP R/3 3.1I to 4.6C and all SAP components based on the 4.6D kernel – for example SAP Business Information Warehouse and SAP Advanced Planner and Optimizer – until SAP determines the end of maintenance for those releases; WAS 6.20-based products are supported on Informix except for Unicode functionality, and WAS 6.30 and 6.40 are supported, with the exception of Java-based database access and Unicode. No support for WAS releases beyond 6.40 is planned at this time.

■ What is the impact of the Java limitation on ABAP-based SAP applications?

Hess: ABAP-based components will not be affected. They can still be used with Informix databases as long
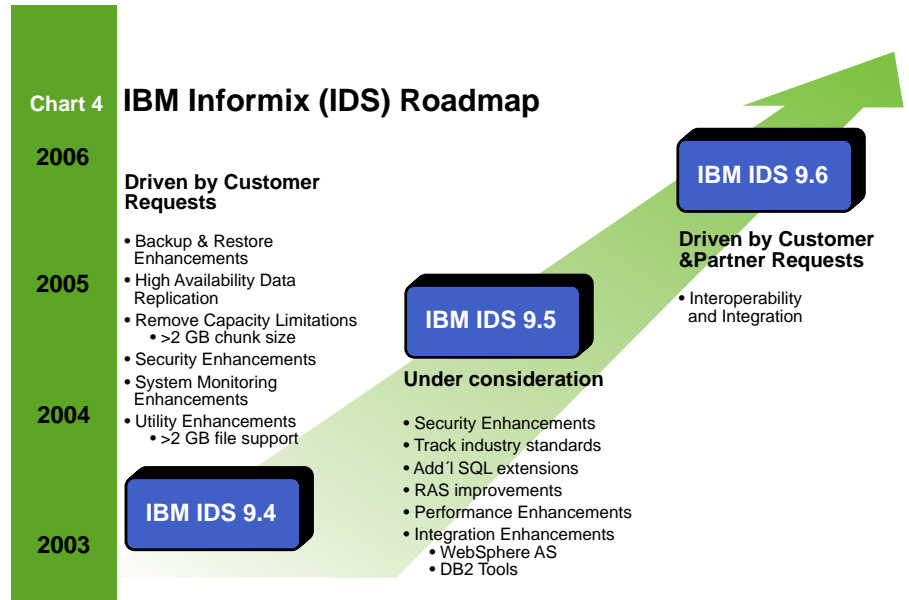
Chart 2 — IBM´s Release Roadmap for Informix (IDS)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	200X
IDS Release	9.31		9.40	9.50		9.60	9.X

Planned Availability:
• IDS 9.4 - 1st half 2003
• IDS 9.5 - 2nd half 2004
• IDS 9.6 - 2nd half 2006

as they run on one of the supported WAS releases mentioned above.

■ What would you tell new and existing SAP customers about Informix?

Perna: IBM recommends DB2 to all new customers, but we will deliver IDS when it's a better fit. We also recommend DB2 to existing IDS customers who plan to use new Java-based SAP modules and/or want to enable the Unicode option. When SAP Informix customers are considering a transition to DB2, IBM will deliver tools and services that will reduce the cost, length, and risk of migration. We will also make available the relevant system management tools used in an SAP IDS environment for DB2 in the same timeframe.

Hess: SAP will sell and ship mySAP.com on IDS to new and existing customers, and support this platform. It's business as usual. But we will not actively recommend IDS to new SAP customers. Current SAP IDS customers who plan to use new non-Java-based SAP modules and applications can implement all mySAP.com solutions on IDS until SAP WAS 6.40. IBM's DB2 has proven to be a powerful database in the SAP environment and is,

therefore, a recommended alternative to IDS.

■ Can customers rely on the Informix platform for their future information technology needs?

Perna: Yes. We will continue to enhance the IDS product to meet key customer requirements. The roadmap we created for upcoming IDS releases makes this point clear. Over time, Informix features will be integrated into DB2 so that it becomes the natural successor to IDS. Customers can rely on their technology investment

by basing IT and strategic business decisions on Informix, using their Informix products and working with mySAP.com solutions.

Hess: Many SAP customers depend on their existing Informix implementation and do not see the need to change. SAP's dedication to the Informix platform means that we will provide effective support for all core and e-business applications. Customers can count on our product development and technical assistance to help them reach their critical IT and business goals. ■

Chart 4 **IBM Informix (IDS) Roadmap**

2006

2005

2004

2003

Driven by Customer Requests

- Backup & Restore Enhancements
- High Availability Data Replication
- Remove Capacity Limitations
  - >2 GB chunk size
- Security Enhancements
- System Monitoring Enhancements
- Utility Enhancements
  - >2 GB file support

IBM IDS 9.4

IBM IDS 9.5

Under consideration

- Security Enhancements
- Track industry standards
- Add´l SQL extensions
- RAS improvements
- Performance Enhancements
- Integration Enhancements
  - WebSphere AS
  - DB2 Tools

IBM IDS 9.6

Driven by Customer &Partner Requests

- Interoperability and Integration

Chart 3 **SAP Release Details for Informix (IDS)**

SAP 3.1I - 4.6C
- Full support of Informix database (IDS) until general SAP defined End of Maintenance for SAP R/3 or WAS release

SAP Web Application Server WAS 6.20 (2002)
- mySAP.com products based on WEB AS 6.20 are supported with IDS 9.3x
- No Unicode Support planned for IDS

SAP WAS 6.30 (2003) and SAP WAS 6.40 (2004)
- WAS 6.30 and 6.40 are supported platforms for IDS
- No support for Java-written SAP applications on IDS planned
- No Unicode Support planned for IDS

For more information contact the IBM SAP International Competence Center (ISICC) at ISICC@de.ibm.com

Please visit our alliance website: www.ibm-sap.com