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News

IBM SAP Workload Analyzer Available Worldwide

By Joanna Doyle

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Insight, IBM's free performance analysis tool for SAP R/3, is now available worldwide, the company announced last month.

"We wanted to provide a value statement for our customers," says Jim Dilley, manager of ERP advanced technical support in the Americas for IBM. "Since Insight is a free offering, we feel it is part and parcel of doing business with IBM. So we're offering a value-add now for our worldwide customers."

Over 200 customers have adopted Insight in the United States. Insight allows users to monitor their system activity during a peak period, and receive a thorough evaluation from IBM via e-mail detailing workload and other aspects of system usage.

"We recommend that customers do it during their peak loads, usually during a month-end close period," Dilley says. "That way they can get a sense of the kind of workload their system handles."

Insight for SAP R/3 is installed on a client PC connected to the LAN, and before activating the monitoring session, the IT manager sets authorization and access rules and communication parameters. IBM recommends IT departments allow Insight to monitor and collect SAP R/3 usage data for four to 10 days, according to Dilley. The collected data is then forwarded to IBM America's Techline personnel for reduction, analysis and report production. Customers can generally expect to receive analysis results within a week. IBM limits customers to utilizing the free analysis service to once per quarter.

Using the data gathered in the recording period, the e-mail report developed by IBM breaks results down into eight system performance indicators: actual active user counts, machine utilization, user/module load distributions, dialog counts, response time characteristics, information about batch and reporting usage, system information and database information. The report is strictly informative; it does not offer any analysis or suggestions on how workload or performance issues might be improved.

IBM also retains a general profile of the analysis results by industry. This means Insight not only provides customers with reliable workload analysis, it also helps IBM know how customers are implementing their products, according to Elliot Luber, global communications manager, IBM enterprise applications solutions.

"Another element of this is that it gives IBM a general idea of what our customers are using, and how our customers are using SAP, so we can determine better ways to serve their specific needs," Luber explains.

Insight for SAP R/3 can run on any SAP production system comprised of Windows NT, AIX, AS/400 S/390 and other non-IBM UNIX environments, and is installed on any Windows client machine that can communicate with the production SAP complex.

While IBM does not officially have plans to release a similar analysis and reporting tool for other ERP systems, Dilley would not rule out the possibility that such products will be developed in the future.

"In the case of SAP R/3, there was a clear demand," he says. "And there's a clear demand in the other ERP spaces, so read between the lines."

Elliot Luber
Global Communications Manager
*Enterprise Application Solutions
*Product Lifecycle Management Solutions

IBM Customer Solutions
590 Madison Ave. (6.24.3)
New York, NY 10022

1-212-745-5094 (tl 243)
Fax: 212-745-2034
Mobile: 646-528-5557
eluber@us.ibm.com