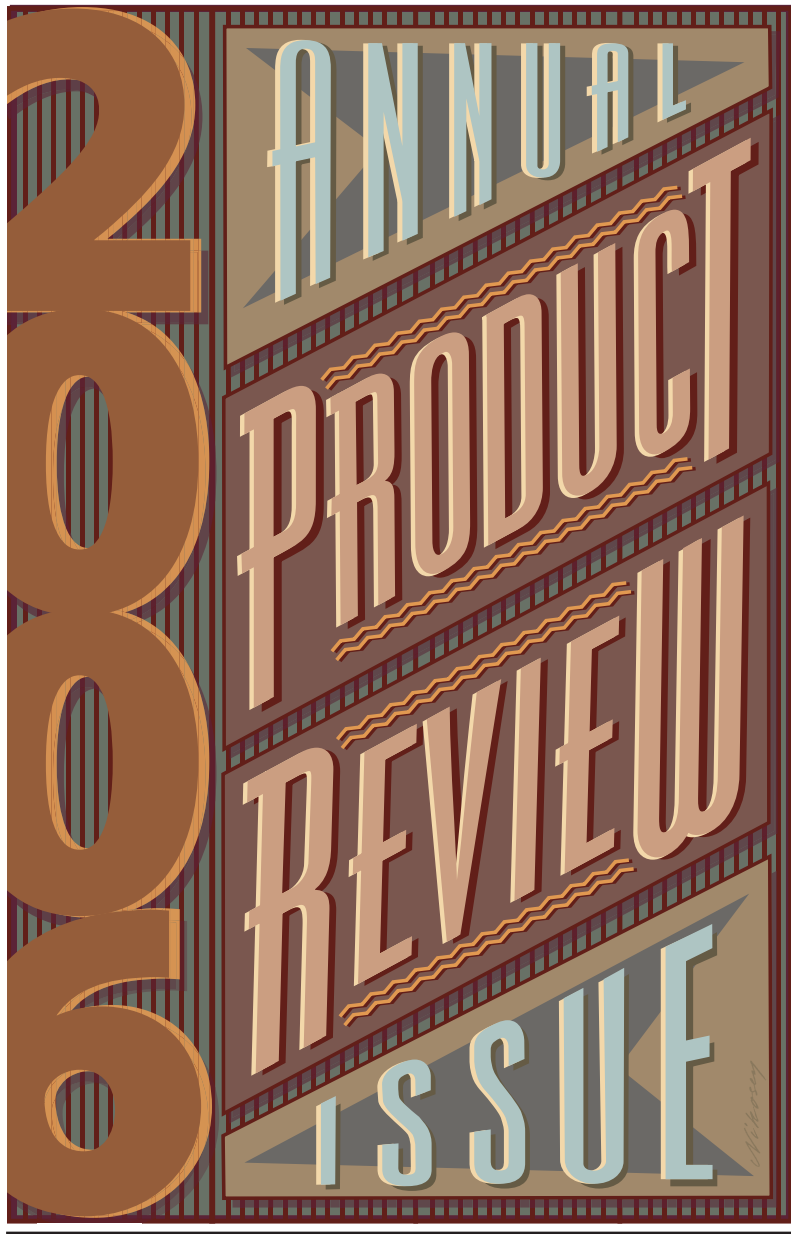


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PRODUCT REVIEW

ER/Studio Makes Sense of Enterprise Data



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ER/Studio Makes Sense of Enterprise Data

REVIEWER: Joe Salvatore, business intelligence technical lead for Idea Integration.

BACKGROUND: Idea Integration is a professional IT consulting and systems integration firm specializing in application development, digital data management, business intelligence, infrastructure and security, and interactive marketing. Idea serves clients throughout the United States with high-value application consulting services. With experience spanning two decades and locations across the U.S., Idea serves market leaders as well as up-and-comers in a variety of industries. Idea also possesses the backing of the professional resources and collective commitment of the MPS Group, a Fortune 1000 billion-dollar services firm.

PLATFORMS: Windows XP, SQL Server 2000 and 2005.

PROBLEM SOLVED: Our ability to properly understand our clients' existing database solutions is paramount to our ability to deliver professional services. Additionally, our efficient and repeatable delivery of high-quality software solutions requires effortless data modeling and physical database generation. Lastly, our development of sophisticated data warehouse solutions requires extensive modeling that includes data lineage documentation.

PRODUCT FUNCTIONALITY: Immediate benefit in productivity has been realized since using ER/Studio from Embarcadero, especially when leveraging domains that represent template data types. These domains can be created hierarchically so specific properties are inherited from the parent domains. These domains help to ensure that we accurately represent many similar data structures with ease as well as guarantee

that we understand the data represented in every data model design we develop.

STRENGTHS: The most valuable utilities within ER/Studio include the Data Lineage and Data Movement Rules utilities. These utilities allow us to understand the many complex source-to-target mappings among decision support systems, ERP databases and transaction processing databases. Refactoring of our data model designs is also very important for our success. Refactoring is accomplished using denormalizations within ER/Studio. Roll up, roll down, horizontal split, vertical split, table merge and column map denormalizations are all well supported and include the ability to undo the denormalization that had been applied. This powerful flexibility permits us to adjust the models to handle complex data retrieval demands. New security management features can manage users, permissions and roles within a logical or physical model and give us the ability to go beyond planning the usual database structures as well as model and design security. Additional benefits are realized while using the capacity-planning features that can forecast storage requirements of newly implemented or existing database systems. These capabilities allow us to better plan what resources are required for our solutions.

WEAKNESSES: Full support of all of the new features of SQL Server 2005, such as XML and varcharmax data types, is not yet available, and we have struggled at times due to the lack of robust undo/redo capabilities. Many of these capabilities are due out in a forthcoming release.

SELECTION CRITERIA: The availability of data lineage tracking and documentation was vastly superior to any other solutions



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reviewed. Security management and capacity planning functionality was also clearly a differentiator for ER/Studio.

DELIVERABLES: Idea uses the reverse-engineering, compare/merge and forward-engineering capabilities to deliver well-documented and well-understood databases. The HTML and Word documentation produced is leveraged to provide our clients with professional documentation. Furthermore, the ability to use the product's automation macros helps to produce standardized models by enforcing these standards through application-event triggers.

VENDOR SUPPORT: The ER/Studio product manager has taken a keen interest in understanding how we use the tool and has been really supportive in assisting us to take advantage of all the capabilities of the currently released version as well as planning feature additions to better support our needs. Embarcadero is truly invested in ER/Studio as a first-class software offering as evidenced by the feature enhancements that are regularly provided with this software.

DOCUMENTATION: ER/Studio's user guide has proven to be very useful in getting us comfortable with both the basic and advanced features that the software supports. This documentation is further supported by the online resources such as the discussion groups and frequently asked questions.