

White Paper – Executive Summary

Overview

In a very short time, eTapestry has become the leading provider of on demand fundraising software with users accessing their data from all over the world. This success is the result of meeting the unique needs that many nonprofit organizations have, without adding to the cost and administrative burdens. This Executive Overview identifies the issues resolved with eTapestry and expands on the design goals.

Problems and Solutions

Problem: Need affordable alternative

Often, nonprofit organizations must exist on a shoestring budget and simply cannot afford the high price of the large, in house fundraising packages. In fact, some can't afford the new computer equipment needed to run these packages. In addition there are numerous administrative issues. Who will maintain the database? Who will do the backups? What happens if the server crashes? If you are trying to raise money for a good cause, you have better things to do with your time than spend it on systems issues!

Solution: Pay as you go

No longer will organizations have to budget for months or years in advance in order to find the money to pay for good fundraising software. By making the software available as a service, you can pay for the services you need on a monthly basis at much lower cost.

Problem: Need simultaneous access to data

From small local organizations to large international organizations, the need for timely access to data is a common theme. Anytime two or more people need access to the same data from different places, the problem of data synchronization raises its ugly head.

Solution: Put the database on the Internet

By accessing the database from the Internet, information is available to everyone in the organization who needs access. No longer do geographical boundaries matter. If you have access the Internet, you can access your data!

Problem: Need platform independence

All organizations feel the need for platform independence. Some organizations must run on whatever hardware and operating systems are donated to them. Others want the ability to choose their own environment and not be shackled by the software vendor's choices. In any case, it is imperative that we are able to provide all client computers access to the same data at the same time.

Solution: Access from a Web browser

Even though eTapestry is on the Internet, everyone can gain access from the computer they already have. By using the web browser as our client we can ensure that nearly any system – including mobile devices – can easily access eTapestry.

eTapestry Design Goals

Ease of Use

Organizations don't want to spend a lot of time training or retraining their staff to use eTapestry! The browser interface provides a uniform, easy to learn solution for getting all users quickly acclimated to the software. This is especially important as various constituents of the organization (board members, volunteers, remote staff, etc.) access data. Ease of use is particularly helpful when navigating through your data for information or when generating reports. In most applications, when you find a piece of information on the screen or in a report, you have no idea where it came from. In eTapestry, that problem is easily resolved – just click on it!

All data in eTapestry is hyper linked! How useful is this? Imagine you are looking at a report listing the gifts from a donor of yours and you see a particular gift that looks interesting. Click on the amount. You will now be viewing the details of that gift. Or you could have clicked on the Donor or the Fund or a Code ... and whatever you clicked on would take you to a screen showing you exactly what that data means!

No administration

What would it be like to never have to install new fundraising software? Or never have to worry about the latest version? Or never need to create backups of your data? That is exactly how eTapestry works. A standard web browser and an internet connection are all that are required for someone to access their eTapestry database. Updates happen automatically and require no manual effort. No CDs to install, no database migration steps to perform.

Software upgrades are only part of the story. Imagine not having to make large up-front investments in hardware to run your fundraising software or having to replace out-dated servers or fix a server when it malfunctions. eTapestry runs on a hosting platform monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and maintained by eTapestry system engineers. New server installation/configuration, repairs to malfunctioning hardware, and database backups are all done as part of the eTapestry service.

Secure Access

As always, data security is of primary importance and even more so on the Internet. Thus, we provide the highest levels of security. Logins control what information is displayed, including specialized sections for different types of users. For example, a volunteer to your organization may need to update schedules or check messages without having access to the rest of the system.

Data is encrypted to prevent interception and reading of transmitted information. It is backed up, tested, and updated automatically. Since your data is hosted by eTapestry your disaster recovery plan is in place. Redundant hardware, offsite backups, and multiple hosting locations give you protection unmatched by in-house systems.

Maximum flexibility for unlimited growth

Technology never stands still and neither do our customers. Therefore we design for continuous customer growth and the ability to quickly add new features from customer requests. Our technical architecture and platform allow us facilitate both of these goals:

- **Modular allocation of application functions:** eTapestry is positioned to add new hardware incrementally to continually provide a high quality user experience in the application. For example, there are servers in the eTapestry architecture whose sole job is to format reports in PDF format. If the demand for formatting PDF reports increases, our monitoring software alerts eTapestry system engineers, who simply add more servers into that area.
- **Service-oriented architecture:** Each function in the application is assigned to a specific service, allowing for specialization and isolating software changes so they have minimal impact across the application. This feature is key for an application that provides new features and fixes on a frequent basis.
- **Redundant hardware:** Each application request is serviced by a number of identical server machines that protect against single points of failure. Failure of a single machine goes unnoticed by the user because other servers pick up the slack until the failing machine is fixed and returned to service. This feature is analogous to a supermarket where there are multiple checkout lines.

Service oriented

Traditional forms of customer service have been greatly expanded and enhanced by utilizing the Internet for fast, efficient communication and information sharing. The foundation of our company rests squarely on a commitment to provide the industry's finest service and support. Online help provides accurate, instant access to information that guides you through operation. Email, telephone and Instant Messaging support options give you easy access to the experts at eTapestry. And online training options give you convenient, flexible, and cost effective solutions, like web-based classes and recorded training videos that will help get your staff up to speed.

Today's Solution – And Tomorrow's

About eTapestry

Founded in 1999, Indianapolis-based eTapestry® is the first web-based donor database and communications management system that delivers its software over the Internet, allowing access from desktops, laptops and mobile devices. eTapestry's web site development, ecommerce and advanced email tools give its more than 3,000 customers a fully integrated and maintenance free solution. For more information, visit www.eTapestry.com.

eTapestry is a Blackbaud company.