

# Less Is More With an ASP

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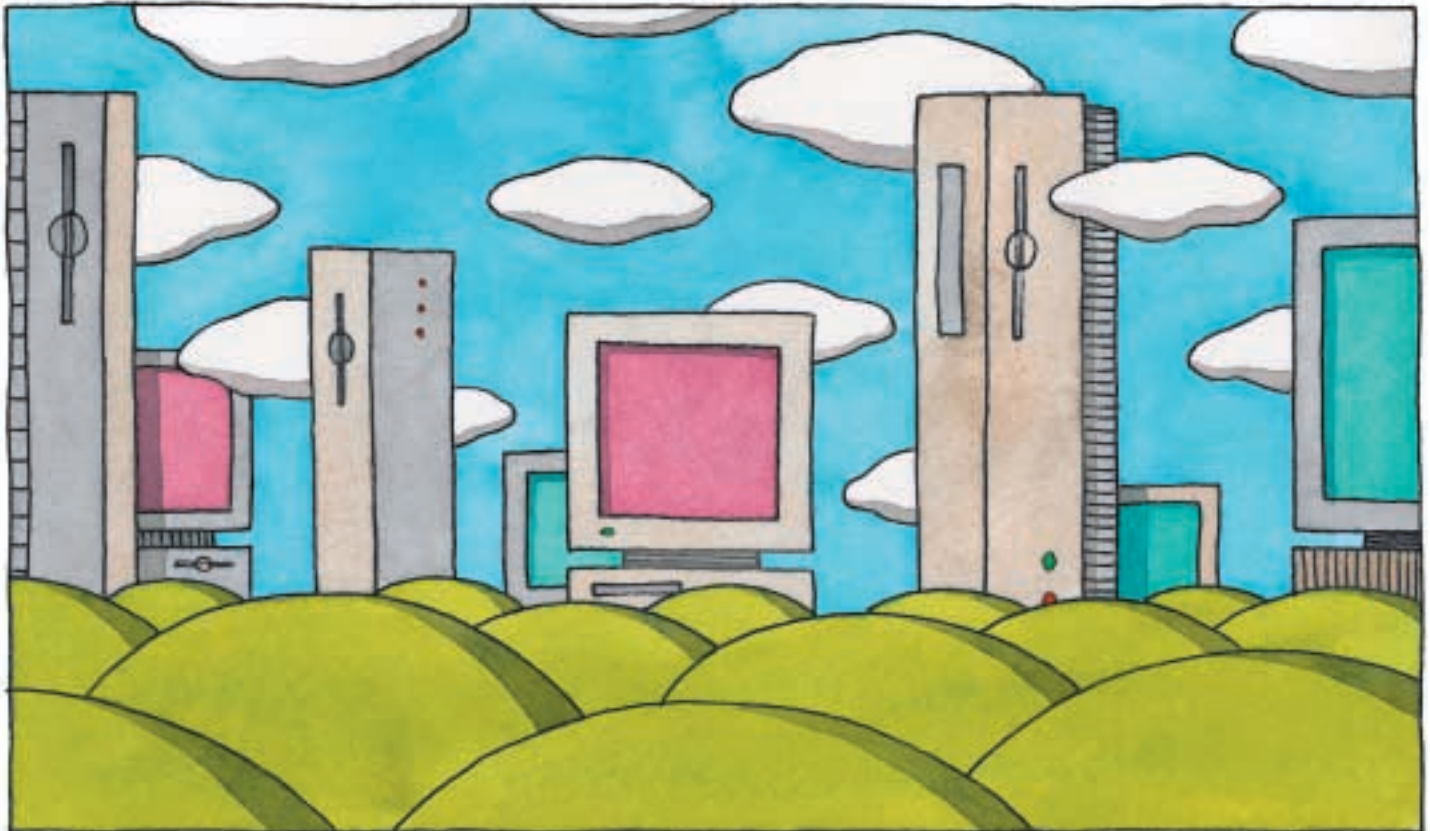
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**Web** reporting, Web-enabled, Web-based...what's next? The web of quality software has expanded to include application service providers, or ASPs. An ASP is a company, sometimes a third party, that deploys, hosts, and manages access to a software application and delivers software-based services to customers from a central data point.

Working with an ASP is a situation where less is more. Less upkeep, less dependence on the company's internal information technology (IT) department. At the same time, more customer support, more focus on the actual application and what you are trying to achieve. Consider, for example, ISO9.

*cont. on p. 105*



## ASP, cont.

ISO9 is an Internet application company that works with clients to design, create, and maintain a complete ISO 9000 quality management system (QMS). Clients create a company QMS at their work sites with guidance and support from ISO9 via a simple Web browser. Glenn Kohner, founder and CTO of ISO9, explains: "Everything can be done over the Internet, so clients get the benefit of high-tech applications without dedicating IT resources. The IT investment, as a result, is negligible." It's negligible because the IT department, already as standard practice, provides Web browsers, which are free, and connects workers to the Internet. That's it from the IT department. No server, no back up, no purchasing the initial product, no upgrading, no worries about meeting latest quality standards—in general, no demands on the department's time and resources. And that, maintains Kohner, is "where a massive amount of the costs associated with deploying a world-class QMS comes from."

Patrick Boyd, marketing and e-commerce manager for Integral Solutions Inc., adds further evidence of the less-for-more nature of ASPs, "Total cost of ownership is much lower than Web-enabled software or conventional client/server or LAN software." Integral Solutions is piloting an ASP service of its advanced quality planning programs, DPACT 2001 and MPACT 2001. Boyd says the company is very excited about this new venture. "As an ASP, we will eliminate the need to install and maintain client-based appli-

cations while housing and maintaining their data," he says. "This will result in considerable capital investment savings, reduced IT/IS staff workload, and enhanced customer support."

Enhanced customer support translates into help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. What's more, technical support staff at the ASP can directly access a client's files, rather than waiting for an e-mail or disk to be mailed about a particular question. This minimizes downtime, not to mention stress. Anybody who has waited for technical support staff to get back to him or her



with an answer knows how long and frustrating the waiting can be. "The support (clients) may need on the application side is nearly instantaneous," says Boyd.

"Just the design level that goes into building our application is something that most companies can't afford to do," adds Kohner. Let alone the coding, implementation, and upgrading. "We gather the benefits of other clients," he adds. "We can put more time and attention into things like security and industrial strength features."

Security is always a concern when you're talking about the mission-critical data of a company. ASPs have high levels of security as part of their service. Integral Solutions' ASP service meets U.S. military grade security, says Boyd. It has three levels of security equal to or exceeding a stan-

dard network—Citrix, Windows 2000, and the application—plus the application itself has five more levels of security. What's more, if a company wanted to protect the ASP from reading the data, say it manufactured nuclear weapons, it could encrypt the data. "At ISO9, we can separate our application," says Kohner, "which runs on our servers with encrypted data that only our customers can see. It's just a couple of extra clicks."

The move toward becoming or teaming with an ASP expands way beyond the area of traditional quality applications into all business applications, specific and general. For example, there's Decisioneering, Inc.'s Crystal Ball, a Monte Carlo simulation tool that lets users gain a better understanding of the probability of a particular outcome. Recognizing the need for proven risk analysis technologies, Decisioneering is making its software available to a larger audience, via the Web and partnerships, including ASPs.

"There's a trend toward outsourcing discreet processes to a separate company that you can measure through a contractual relationship," says Kohner. "That's what we really do: We are your IT department outsourced for quality management systems." While ISO9 takes care of QMSs, Integral Solutions helps you with advanced quality planning, and Decisioneering leads you through risk analysis, other software companies are looking to be your IT department outsourced for other areas. Check out these leaders in the following pages and on the Web.