

Semantra 2.5 Searches for Business Intelligence

By Michael LoPrest

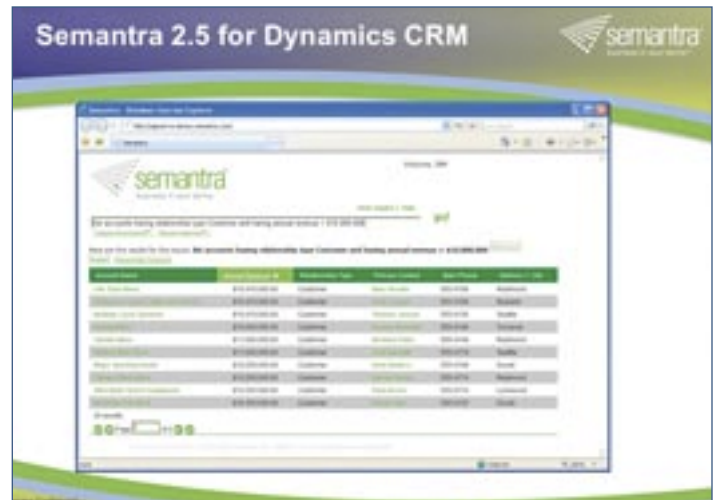
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On Oct. 1, natural language search company Semantra will release Semantra 2.5 for Microsoft Dynamics CRM. With this new product, Semantra seeks to bring effective, efficient search capabilities to the realm of business intelligence (BI). Semantra 2.5, which sits on top of Microsoft Dynamics CRM, streamlines searching within that enterprise application, with capabilities including summary analytics, linking results back to the CRM, exporting results into Excel, and dynamically adjusting results sets. This set of functions and Semantra's streamlined search interface are designed to simplify business intelligence and analytics so that every member of a sales team, irrespective of their technical expertise, has access to as much valuable BI information as possible.

"Sales guys are generally not all that technically savvy," says Cody Aufricht, VP of marketing for Semantra. "And they generally don't have a lot of patience." By providing a search capability within Microsoft Dynamics CRM that looks a lot like the single search box web search that they're used to, Semantra 2.5 hopes to break down some of the barriers between information users and their critical corporate data. Organizations that were previously forced to rely on a handful of IT or BI specialists to make decisions based on CRM data can now rely on users of all levels to have access to the same important information and make informed decisions.

A May 2008 report from Forrester by Boris Evelson and Matthew Brown titled "Search + BI + Unified Information Access" pointed out the need in the BI marketplace for a product with natural language capabilities. "Most casual BI users can't translate a business question such as 'What is the value of our sales pipeline in the first half of the year?' into the technical language," the report claims. "Semantra specializes in this functionality. Rather than learn an entire application, a sales rep can type into a search box a question in the form of a statement like 'list accounts scheduled to close before July 2008' to generate a list of opportunities from a customer relationship management (CRM) system."

According to the company, Semantra 2.5 can be installed



in about 15 minutes, and it can be used right out of the box. However, Semantra's Aufricht says that's not how the product works best. Because every industry and every company has its own unique terminology and nomenclature, a couple of weeks spent developing and refining the product's ontology will greatly improve the accessibility of information in a company's CRM database.

Semantra asserts that its partnership with Microsoft on Semantra 2.5 does Microsoft as much good as it does for Microsoft's Dynamics CRM customers. Microsoft's benefits from the collaboration include an increased number of licenses sold as a result of the enlarged userbase for Dynamics CRM, differentiation from other CRM products, and an ad hoc analytics standard for all Dynamics and Platform products. Over the course of the coming year, Semantra intends to expand its natural language BI search offerings to work with products from Oracle and SAP.

By adhering to the "paradigm of the search box," Semantra is making the promise of business intelligence come true, Aufricht says. "There's always been a phenomenon in offices where decisions are made based on who has the most compelling argument. Semantra 2.5 gives everyone in an organization easy, rapid access to the same important information, meaning business decisions can be made with confidence in real time."