



Expanding the Information Reach for Workgroups: FileMaker Pro 6

— FileMaker, Inc.

► Hurwitz Report



Expanding the Information Reach for Workgroups: FileMaker Pro 6

— FileMaker, Inc.

iii Executive Summary

This white paper discusses the information delivery needs of workgroups and explains how FileMaker Pro 6 is providing workgroups with an accessible solution to address their business needs while also delivering an open standards approach that easily feeds into enterprise IT systems.

1 Information Delivery Needs in the Workgroup

The proliferation of data sources that exist within a corporation contributes to driving business operations and decision making. The challenge lies in finding better ways to manage and analyze the data we have at our disposal.

1 Constraints on Corporate IT

With the proliferation of corporate networks, the “always-on” nature of the Internet that necessitates around-the-clock access to computer systems, and the expansion of devices that must tie into the infrastructure, IT departments are under a considerable amount of pressure to keep business systems up and running.

2 FileMaker Pro 6

The latest release in the FileMaker family, FileMaker Pro 6, builds on the FileMaker heritage of providing an easy-to-use product that delivers rich technical capabilities.

4 Customer Case Studies

Three customer examples illustrate FileMaker Pro 6’s capabilities.

- 4 Volvo Action Services
- 4 National Disaster Communications Response Team
- 4 Associated Press

5 The Hurwitz Take

With the addition of XML import and export of data, FileMaker Pro 6 is providing users with almost limitless possibilities for integrating business-critical information into FileMaker databases.

A Hurwitz Group white paper written for:

FileMaker, Inc.
5201 Patrick Henry Drive
Santa Clara, CA 95054-1171
Tel: 408 987 7000

www.filemaker.com

Published by:
Hurwitz Group, Inc.
111 Speen Street, Framingham, MA 01701 ► Telephone: 508 872 3344 ► Fax: 508 872 3355
Email: info@hurwitz.com ► Web: www.hurwitz.com

July 2002

© Copyright 2002, Hurwitz Group, Inc.
All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced or stored in a retrieval system
or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Information serves as the lifeblood for organizations. It fuels the decision-making process, drives business operations, and provides the underlying foundation for building business.

In and of itself, information can be stagnant unless it is shared and reused within and beyond the workgroup. With all the changes technology has brought to the business world, one of the most significant is the ability to access and capture a wide range of information from a multitude of sources. Technology users thus benefit from tapping into a vast richness of information, yet they face the challenge of how best to manage and analyze the information resources that are available.

IT organizations are tasked with building systems that improve the flow of information throughout the enterprise. Given the extensive demands to develop systems attuned to the specific requirements of the business constituents within the enterprise, priorities need to be set. Projects need to be assessed and scheduled based on staffing resources. Often workgroup projects get pushed down in the backlog queue, creating an information void that impedes the workgroup's ability to automate its processes.

This gap has created an opportunity for products that enable workgroups to harness their information into database solutions that enable them to capture their knowledge and share it with co-workers as well as provide flexibility to deliver the information where and when it's needed.

This paper discusses the information delivery needs of workgroups and explains how FileMaker Pro 6 is providing workgroups with an accessible solution to address their business needs while also delivering an open standards approach that easily feeds into enterprise IT systems.

Information Delivery Needs in the Workgroup

During the course of the workday, it sometimes seems that we are inundated with information. The proliferation of data sources that exist within a corporation contributes to driving business operations and decision making. The challenge lies in finding better ways to manage and analyze the data we have at our disposal. Data needs to be integrated with applications that provide the appropriate context so that information can be usable and actionable. As information needs vary by the role and job responsibilities of the corporation's employees, data must be fluid so that it can feed into multiple applications and enable information exchange throughout the organization.

Another challenge for information delivery is finding solutions that can navigate across the complex corporate infrastructure. The computing environment is a mix of multiple platforms, multiple applications, and multiple databases. Mobile devices have been added to the mix of information delivery platforms. New rich data types such as video files, audio files, and digital images are important components of the corporate information asset data stream.

The complexity of the computing environment can build technical barriers that impede data sharing and block the flow of information. Open standards such as XML have emerged and have experienced fast and widespread adoption as a means of providing universal data transport to unify information both inside and outside the corporation. XML serves as a common integration language that bridges the gulf between disparate systems.

In addition to the challenges within the organization, customer information needs are of paramount importance. All departments in the enterprise that interact with customers need to feed customer information databases and be able to access them to provide quality customer service. In today's competitive market, customers have a low tolerance for incomplete service — they demand a faster response to their inquiries and do not want to be shuffled around the organization to get their problem resolved.

Constraints on Corporate IT

The task of managing the complex corporate infrastructure rests on the shoulders of the IT department. With the proliferation of corporate networks, the "always-on" nature of the Internet that necessitates around-the-clock access to computer systems, and the expansion of devices that must tie into the infrastructure, IT departments are under a considerable amount of pressure to keep business systems up and running.

Adding to the pressure is the current economic climate in which IT staffs have been cut back. At the same time, the demand for new systems, improvements to current systems, and the

need to constantly improve technology's ability to tighten up business operations continue unabated.

Because IT departments must service the entire enterprise, priorities need to be established, and projects are scheduled based on parameters set for mission-critical development needs. As a result, a backlog of projects waits for IT attention, despite the slowing of corporate IT spending. Many of these projects will never even be started. Workgroup priorities are too often left out of the mix. Individual projects may look insignificant in the big picture of IT priorities, but because of what they could mean in terms of departmental efficiency, the backlog can pose a significant barrier to overall corporate productivity.

Leaving workgroup projects waiting for a technical life rope from IT creates a costly void. Workgroup efficiency suffers, and the information flow within the organization suffers as pockets of data silos in different areas of the enterprise show no means of connection to enable unified data collection and sharing.

This situation has created a need in the market for solutions that provide workgroups with powerful yet easy-to-use tools that give them the self-sufficiency to build database applications to address their specific needs while also building a bridge to enterprise systems.

FileMaker Pro 6

FileMaker has a deep understanding of the workgroup information needs and delivers products that enable workgroups to create solutions to address their requirements for data creation, management, and analysis. With over 7.5 million users worldwide, FileMaker has continued to evolve the capabilities of its FileMaker Pro product without losing its focus on providing an easy-to-learn and easy-to-use tool that facilitates productivity for the knowledge worker.

The latest release in the FileMaker family, FileMaker Pro 6, builds on the FileMaker heritage of providing an easy-to-use product that delivers rich technical capabilities. FileMaker's full-featured database solution provides a unique ability to capture complex business rules via a simple point-and-click metaphor. This allows workgroups to capture the sophistication of their business processes while providing an intuitive interface that speeds the process and doesn't require end users to do technical gymnastics to accomplish their business aims.

Significant enhancements in FileMaker Pro 6 include:

- ▶ **Image capture/import facility to enable richer database content with multimedia elements.** Digital images can be imported from a digital camera or disk to the database through a point-and-click interface. Entire folders of images can be imported, saving time by eliminating the image-by-image download and wait process.

- ▶ **Integrated support of XML import/export to enable universal information exchange with a growing set of applications and data sources.** FileMaker's support for the import and export of XML data will allow FileMaker to be a leader in bringing the power of XML interchange to the workgroup. XML has risen to become the de facto standard for exchanging data between information sources in a platform-neutral form. It serves as one of the underpinnings of the Web Services computing paradigm that will provide organizations with greater flexibility in conducting transactions within the enterprise and out to external customers, partners, and suppliers. The addition of XML import/export support offers a wealth of new capabilities, including pulling in data from a web site to incorporate into a FileMaker application. XML export enables reports generated in FileMaker to be delivered in any text-based file format; for example, with an Excel worksheet, the recipient can receive and manipulate the data in the Excel environment. It can also export data to a Word document so that the most accurate data can be incorporated into business documents, such as contracts. FileMaker's XML capabilities will also enable data to be exchanged with enterprise systems such as SAP and enable the connection to SQL data sources without the use of open database connectivity (ODBC) drivers.
- ▶ **Automated approach with templates and guidance to simplify getting started with the simplest or most complex database.** FileMaker Pro 6 adds over 20 new templates to enable users to get a jump start on productivity. These templates deliver instant solutions for developing database applications for product catalogs, inventory management, purchase orders, time billing, and more.
- ▶ **Usability enhancements with additional options for customizing the FileMaker workspace.** FileMaker Pro 6 offers a wealth of enhancements, including simplified "finds" on any data type within the database; more end-user options for doing "and/or" searches and narrowing search criteria; tools to easily graph FileMaker information; easy "global find and replace text" capability to provide greater flexibility in changing text throughout the database; and a new Format Painter that makes it easier than ever to design compelling and consistent forms that can adhere to style guidelines.

With all these new capabilities, FileMaker Pro 6 provides users with greater flexibility to publish and exchange information within the organization and to external constituents such as partners, suppliers, and customers. FileMaker provides the workgroup with the tools that it needs to organize its information while also enabling a tighter integration with enterprise systems. This provides users with the power they need to get their job done. At the same time, it makes the IT department happy because FileMaker's standards-based environment fits nicely into the corporate data stream.

Customer Case Studies

The following customer examples illustrate FileMaker Pro 6's capabilities.

Volvo Action Services

Volvo Action Services provides customer communication support for the entire family of Volvo automotive products, including cars, trucks, marine engines, and construction equipment. Support representatives provide front-line service support to Volvo customers who call in with automotive problems. Because the support line is open around the clock, Volvo Action Service's customer database system, developed with FileMaker Pro, is under heavy use. The database is used for several operational aspects such as tracking calls and managing the inventory of parts and supplies. These systems are integrated with other legacy systems, enabling data to be transported throughout the company. The addition of XML support in FileMaker has allowed Volvo to tap into external data sources and improve the ability to add information to its database. For example, Volvo can now receive updated information on vehicles and customers in XML via HTTP and have the information delivered to the Volvo web server, where the information can be processed and the data can be entered into the database on a real-time basis.

National Disaster Communications Response Team

Based in Seattle, the National Disaster Communications Response Team (NDCRT) coordinates and manages communication resources and volunteers so that they can be mobilized in the event of a disaster. One communication resource NDCRT provides during time of disaster is networked data communications, including temporary database management during an operation. Initially, NDCRT managed this information with a Linux database solution but found that the product required extensive end-user training and more administrative overhead than it wanted to dedicate to the solution. NDCRT moved to FileMaker Pro 6 for its ease of use and its impressive record in handling ability. Because NDCRT works with a number of nonprofit agencies throughout the nation to coordinate activities, it needs to exchange information with remote end users who access the information on a variety of computer platforms. FileMaker's XML import/export capabilities make collecting and managing disaster-related information easier and also allow NDCRT to easily share the data with all constituents.

Associated Press

The Associated Press (AP) news organization uses FileMaker Pro to manage a wide range of data that provides facts and supporting details for inclusion in news stories published

worldwide. AP subscribers, which include newspapers and television broadcast stations, have access to these databases via the AP web site, and news outlets can pull information whenever they need it to work on news stories. News organizations can also link to these databases so that the information can be accessed by their readers via their own web site. AP's FileMaker database system contains a vast amount of data; for example, it holds data from the 2000 United States Census for every city and town in the country, supplemented by Commerce Department demographic information. FileMaker's XML export capabilities will provide the AP with a new method for pushing out data in the news industry's standard format, News Industry Text Format (NITF), for easier dissemination of information to its subscribers.

The Hurwitz Take

FileMaker Pro 6 further advances FileMaker's capabilities for providing workgroups with an easy-to-use environment that fulfills information sharing needs while also providing expanded flexibility in importing and exporting data. With the workplace now evolved to extend beyond office walls, remote access to data is a necessity rather than a "nice-to-have" capability. The Internet is now a standard platform for business communication and a key conduit for delivering data within organizations and out to customers, partners, and suppliers. With the addition of XML import and export of data, FileMaker Pro 6 is providing users with almost limitless possibilities for integrating business-critical information into FileMaker databases and opening up new options for publishing information to the most appropriate venue for the information consumer, whether that is the Web, the desktop, an intranet, or a mobile device.



About Hurwitz Group

Hurwitz Group, an analyst, research, and consulting firm, is a recognized leader in identifying and articulating the business value of technology. Known for its real-world experience, consultative style, and pragmatic approach, Hurwitz Group provides strategic guidance to its clients by delivering analysis, market research, custom content, and consulting services. Clients include Global 2000, software, services, systems, and investment companies.