

# Lowe's, Nordstrom Expand Infrastructures to Support BI

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-- LAS VEGAS -- The growing use of business intelligence technology is beginning to strain some corporate IT infrastructures, according to some users.

For example, Lowe's this month completed an installation of 3,000 AIX-based IBM servers to better handle spikes in user demand for access to the MicroStrategy BI tools it uses.

The MicroStrategy tools previously ran on Windows-based systems, CIO Steve Stone said in an interview at the MicroStrategy user conference here last week.

In addition, Lowe's is building a second data center in San Antonio that will, among other things, be used to back up the retailer's Teradata data warehouse and MicroStrategy BI applications, Stone said.

The new data center is slated to be completed by year's end, he said.

The home improvement company plans to use the Dual Active System Solution from Dayton, Ohio-based Teradata in the new data center and in its existing one in Winston-Salem, N.C., so that the data warehouse and BI tools can be run in both locations.

"Once you start making operational decisions that impact the lifeblood of your company, you have to make [BI] a Tier 1 application in your company," Stone said.

Nordstrom Inc. now has 5,000 MicroStrategy users running 10,000 reports per day, but it projects that its user base will grow to 20,000 running 35,000 reports per day by next year, said James Taylor, program manager for data warehousing and BI at the Seattle-based retailer.

To absorb this growth without suffering performance hits, the company last month moved its BI operations from a 32-bit Windows environment to 64-bit machines running Sun Microsystems Inc.'s Solaris 10 operating system.

So far, the company has seen a 9% decrease in report response times and an overall 30% improvement in performance, Taylor said.

"We are having good response times," he added. "We are ready to take on new projects now."

Vaidyanathan Seshan, IT project manager at Nordstrom, said that once the new systems were installed, "users did not see any change in look and feel [of the BI application]. For them, it was a nonevent."



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