

NO Compromises

Qualifying the best data warehouse vendor. *by Robin Jessani*

You've got an opportunity and you want to seize it quickly. You need a simplified, high-performance, decision support solution that can be implemented speedily, easily and without breaking your budget—a solution that doesn't require a lot of your resources to set up or administer and will appeal to your users and to your management.

You don't want to go through a lengthy evaluation process, but you want to make sure that you are getting the best solution for your money.

Accept no compromises—look for a solution that can fulfill your needs for high performance and ease of implementation at the right price.

It's the vendors' goal to convince you that they have superior technology and performance and are the best choice for you. Taking the time to do a little detective work will help you identify the solution that truly delivers the highest value for your investment.



Look for solutions that do not require trade-offs for one dimension over another. While simplicity, ease and price are primary considerations in your purchase decision, you don't want to compromise on other solution characteristics either. For example, you can have unbelievable performance, but if it is at the expense of availability or another dimension, is it worth it? Although solutions may have common tasks and produce common results, they will vary in how they

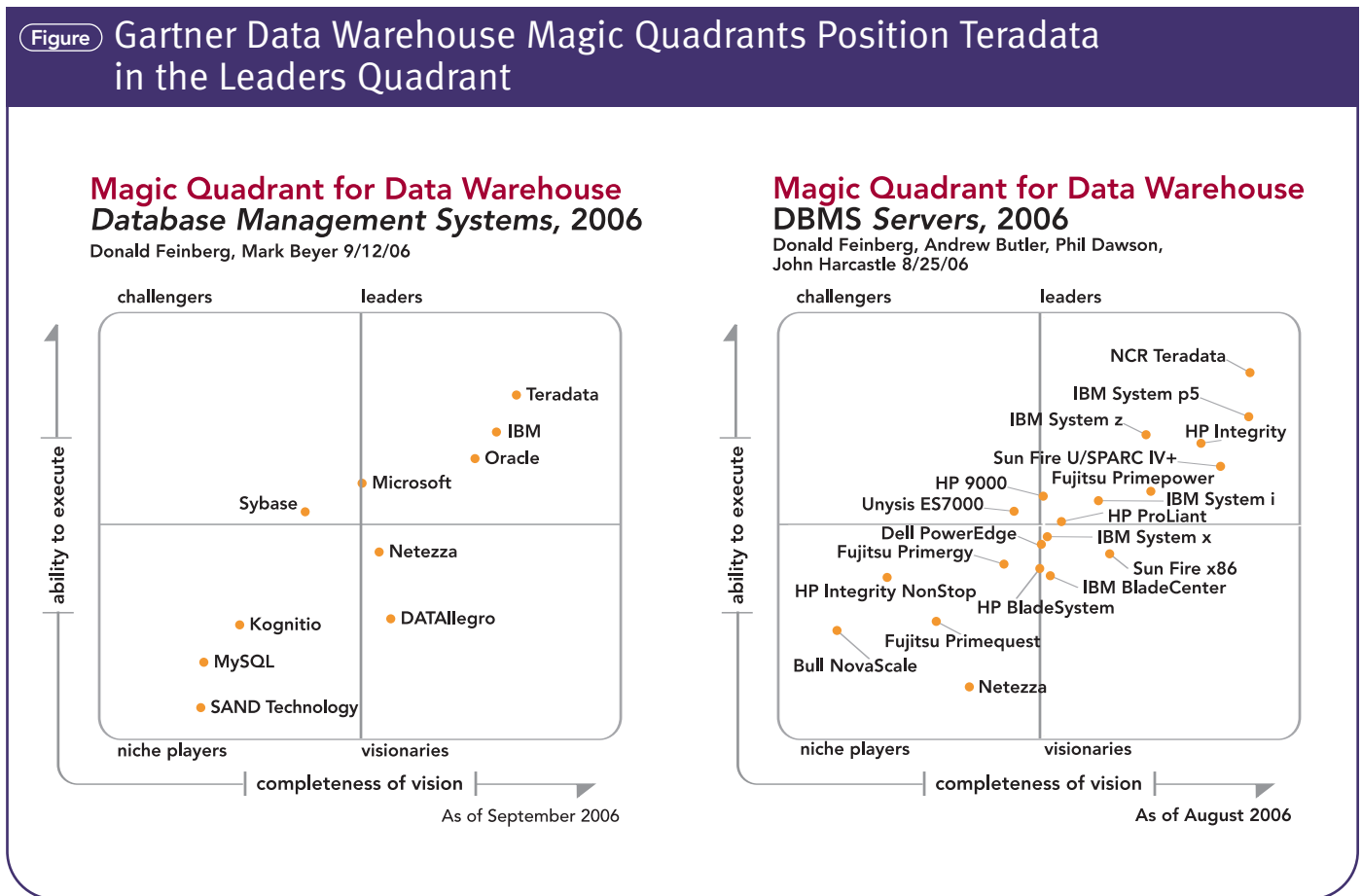
accomplish those tasks, in what timeframe and at what cost.

Finding a solution that "has it all" may seem daunting, but a lot of the preliminary analysis has been done for you. You can simplify your selection process tremendously by consulting with people who are knowledgeable and experienced. Industry analysts perform independent comparisons of vendors and can provide objective opinions of different solutions. Their reports depict vendor positioning measured

against a common set of criteria and can be helpful in assessing the technology and performance of competing solutions.

Likewise, customer references are a great source of information that provide incredible insight into vendor capabilities and working relationships. Ask the vendor to arrange for you to speak with some of its customers that mirror your situation—where you are today and where you'd like to be in the future. These organizations not only have insights into choosing a

Figure Gartner Data Warehouse Magic Quadrants Position Teradata in the Leaders Quadrant



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vendor for a project, they have also lived through decision support evolution and can tell you whether the vendor will meet your ongoing needs.

This background work gives you a good starting point, but you will still want to do

common ground rules based on your specific requirements will give you confidence when measuring performance and other dimensions across solutions.

Once performance assessments are understood, consider projected solution

of concurrent users. Others offer multi-purpose decision support solutions at competitive price points, capable of supporting several applications and many users. They provide the flexibility that single-focus solutions can't.

In fact, many companies start small—often with a single application area. By looking ahead, plans for growth can be factored into your decision-making criteria.

Think about your cell phone and how rapidly changing technology is affecting feature adoption. You can now watch short videos, send and receive e-mail, or listen to music with your cell phone. While you may not have intended to use these capabilities, they are available to you. As you experiment with them your usage grows. The same is true with data warehousing. In decision support, while the extended capabilities of multi-purpose solutions may seem beyond your scope right now, they do not affect your daily operations and you just may recognize a need for them in the very near future.

A lower acquisition price doesn't mean that a solution will be a better deal. Value cannot be measured on price alone.

additional primary research. Issuing a request for information to all the vendors can help you quickly whittle down your list. For example, your top 10 questions, such as “Are you certified with our chosen extract, transform and load [ETL] and online analytical processing [OLAP] tools?” may knock several contenders out of the running.

Taking steps

With your short list established, you can compare and validate performance claims with a benchmark or a performance analysis. When taking this step, think about how the solution will meet your users' needs. For example, consider:

- > How many concurrent users and queries are likely to run?
- > Will the queries vary in prioritization?
- > Are some queries response-time-sensitive?
- > Can you load data while running queries?
- > How often do your queries run (multiple times a day, once a day, once a month, etc.)?

Asking—and answering—questions such as these will give you a way to assess performance across vendors. Setting up

value by comparing the price of the solution relative to the business results it delivers. Keep in mind that a lower acquisition price doesn't mean that a solution will be a better deal. Value cannot be measured on price alone—but rather by the value to the organization, based on meeting the performance goals for the users and applications relative to the price paid.

Some vendors advertise single-purpose solutions at relatively low price points, supporting one application and a handful

Find the best high-performance solution

A few key steps will help you find the best high-performance solution for your organization:

- > Consult with industry analysts.
- > Ask for and meet with customer references.
- > Narrow the search by asking your top 10 questions.
- > Measure performance based on common ground rules.
- > Consider present and future needs.
- > Project overall value for the solution, not just cost.

Why settle?

Many vendors are messaging simple, fast and affordable data warehouse solutions. Why settle for single-purpose solutions when you can get high-performance solutions at similar price points? In today's unpredictable and ever-changing world of business, these capabilities are incredibly valuable. You need the best information to compete. Use your resources to evaluate and select the high-performance solution that will provide the most value to your organization. **T**

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