

Computing Canada, June 29, 2001, Vol. 27 No. 14

## Location Intelligence

A Calgary company's platform brings location smarts to corporate systems

7/5/2001 3:48:18 PM

by Michael MacMillan

Calgary-based Cquay Inc. has announced the general availability of Common Ground, a platform that brings location smarts to a wide variety of corporate systems – from databases and legacy applications to wireless solutions.

Not only could its recently unveiled software change the way companies search their databases, Cquay said it's also breaking new ground in the area of location intelligence services in the process.

"It's all about adding location intelligence to existing applications and enterprise systems," said Calvin McElroy, CEO of Cquay. "Common Ground can translate, on-the-fly, various forms of location references."

All companies store data related to location, whether it be related to customer data or shipping routes, McElroy said. Although database and data mining technology enable users to sort through information in any number of ways, its greatest weakness remains its relative inability to extrapolate data based on area or location. That includes making use of specific data such as area codes, postal/zip codes and addresses.

According to McElroy, it's this problem that Common Ground is designed to address. With it, enterprises of all sizes can organize their location data using a common reference system, enabling them to do location-specific searches or render maps on-the-fly. "It helps you understand the relationship in your CRM database from a geographic perspective," McElroy said. Making that

information available to companies can improve their decision-making abilities as well as reduce costs and offer better customer service, according to Cquay.

As such, McElroy said his target is set directly on the enterprise. "We would see the potential growth in the application of location-based services in the corporate world."

At the core of Common Ground is an indexing model known as the Universal Spatial Locator (USL) which organizes spatial data and establishes the necessary links between proprietary databases and Common Ground. It also enables users to match location information from different databases.

The platform is comparable to more well-known geographic information systems (GIS), McElroy said. However, he added it is less costly than most GIS packages in that it is available to users via a subscription or paid usage application service provider (ASP) model.

"The difference is all about adding local interfaces to existing applications or systems," he said. "It's quite a departure from traditional GIS (systems) . . . they're all closed systems.

"It's not a replacement for GIS . . . but it (helps) you understand the spatial relationships in your database."

According to Framingham, Mass.-based International Data Corp., the spatial information management market has split into three distinct segments — geographic information systems (GIS), business support systems (BSS) and personal productivity. In doing so, it has moved away from proprietary systems that support geo-centric applications to more open database systems that support mainstream business processes.

It's also a growth market, according to IDC, which expects revenues in the worldwide SIM market to reach a value of US\$2.1 billion by 2004.

Cquay grew out of a consulting business that implemented large-scale operational systems and databases to manage engineering and scientific data, focused mainly on the telecom, utility, oil and gas customers. According to McElroy, a number of the early consulting projects involved SIM technology, which led the company to ultimately focus its technical expertise in that field.

Common Ground is comprised of three components: an application services kit for developers, access to location and services information through the Common Ground platform, and integration services to develop custom interfaces to corporate applications and databases. The first enterprise clients to use its map data are expected to be up and running in Q3 of 2001.

[Close Window](#)