

Accretive Delivers Unified Analytics Across Business and IT Interdependencies for a Major European Bank

Abstract

Accretive Technologies' X-Act Technology and Management Framework is designed to step beyond traditional approaches to BI and Big Data with a well-defined vision of the more dynamic linkages between IT services and business outcomes. Accretive modeling, emulation and predictive technologies allow for the discovery of unknowns, with support for "what if" analysis directed at IT and business planning. The X-Act Platform maps infrastructure and application architectures and IT service performance interdependencies to critical business systems, such as an in-house payment system or customer-facing credit-approval system.

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ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) analysts spoke to an Accretive deployment in Europe on February 21, 2013, just after Accretive's ten-year anniversary. EMA requested the discussion to better understand how Accretive's X-Act Platform works, and how it can bring value when faced with the many vagaries of real-world IT application, infrastructure and business dynamics. The discussion is summarized in this EMA impact brief.

An Accretive Deployment in Europe

EMA spoke with an executive IT architect supporting a large financial services organization in Europe. Accretive had been socialized within that environment to initial executive enthusiasm, which gradually led to the critical deployment described below.

What is your role and how did you get involved with Accretive?

"I primarily play the role of technical advisor at the bank. I am an executive IT architect, meaning that I help with architectures to support business processes and business outcomes as well as technical architecture within IT. So I help to coordinate initiatives that involve both sides of the house.

"I saw value with Accretive because it can address both business and IT performance holistically. I was able to talk to the CIO and the CTO and asked for a chance to see what the solution could do. Fortunately they became excited about the very thing that so many people struggle with—the fact that Accretive can provide unified mathematical modeling and analytics across both business and IT, including applications and infrastructure. And it does this in order to evaluate if a business-related or IT-related component is performing as it should, as well as what the tradeoffs would be if you made a specific change to one or multiple components."

What is the lead initiative where you currently plan to apply Accretive?

"We are developing some international service capabilities for digital banking and we wanted to have Accretive help us evaluate which system platforms would be most effective for this particular deployment. Not surprisingly, none of the vendors involved were optimized to do this. So we ran a set of measurements across the various components to assess workload optimization, application performance, along with business activity and business process-related variables, and Accretive allowed us to make an intelligent choice."

How are you going about the deployment?

“The complete deployment will require looking at components across the entire IT food chain—including network, systems, database and application interdependencies right on down to the endpoint. We need a system that can withstand the unpredictable loads from digital banking. We hope to have it fully ready by Q2 this year.

“At the start, we selected five to ten of the most resource-consuming transactions and developed a complete representation of the business processes down to the lowest level of the IT infrastructure by tapping into Accretive’s library of components. It was something of a two-prong approach. First we modeled the system as it should behave perfectly, without any bottlenecks—including both the IT and the human side of the equation. And then we took measurements to evaluate current state and compared the two to better understand where the bottlenecks are and where they will likely be in the future.

“Accretive can tell you all this. It doesn’t always tell you in detail what you need to do to fix the problems. But it does tell you where the problems are, where they are likely to materialize in the future, and how planned changes on all fronts may affect the outcome one way or the other. This makes investments in new resources, if they’re needed, a fact-based discussion with a clear business context, for instance. Not surprisingly, this is one of the reasons for IT executive enthusiasm.”

How does Accretive collect measurement data

“While Accretive has XML-enabled capabilities for importing information from other sources, it also has its own agent collectors for systems and its own capabilities for interrogating log files. At the moment we run a set of measurements every month to calibrate the variations in infrastructure performance and help assess where latencies and disruptions are emerging. Accretive provides a very small piece of code to run on servers to help calibrate their model. It’s completely non-disruptive, by the way. And this helps to make it much more popular.”

What have you learned so far?

“Once we began the deployment, we already found a number of specific issues. For instance we found that we were running into serialization with one of our Java components, which had before this gone unnoticed by the people reviewing the code. Catching this also provided a clear way of assessing where we were between planned outcomes and current reality as it mapped to the planned evolution of the digital service.

“We also discovered that one of the mainframes was consuming too many MIPs. We made some adjustments to platform settings based on Accretive recommendations and we got just what we asked for in outcome. So now we are looking to generalize Accretive support for benchmarking all the components including the mainframes.”

What is the biggest challenge you see surrounding Accretive?

“Accretive’s analytics are both unique and uniquely powerful. But this is puzzling to a great many people, so the greatest challenge is to communicate the value before proof of concept or deployment. Once deployed, Accretive works and quickly shows value. But Accretive’s capabilities stretch across many existing siloed buckets from business analytics to IT performance analytics. So people find it hard to grasp how Accretive’s mathematical models can be so effective when most are accustomed to more statistical models for analysis that function very differently.

“Therefore, presenting this in abstract is a challenge, but if you can find a “fire” going on then the process of socializing the value becomes accelerated. In one instance we helped to solve a problem with an application that was too chatty in its interactions with an Oracle database, and so it wasn’t making use of Oracle in a very effective way. To be honest, we found that the application wasn’t very well designed, so once we pointed out the problem, it went back to Development.

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“Generally I believe that the architects and IT executives understand and accept Accretive’s value faster than most business executives, on the one hand, and more niche oriented technical professionals on the other. If you talk to a DB2 or a CICS expert about Accretive, they complain that “You can’t modelize our system, it’s way too complex.” And they’re right, the way models are traditionally done via statistics. But for Accretive’s analytics based on more advanced, predictive mathematical modeling the models really do work. I remember telling the DB2 manager who was resistant to Accretive at first that she had a problem with her system with bottlenecks blocking performance. She said she was aware of it, but she never had the data to convince her management of the problem. Now she did.”

What do you like most about Accretive?

“I like Accretive because it is successful. It delivers what you need.”

EMA Perspective

Like many of the technical professionals described above, EMA was skeptical at first of how Accretive could effectively represent the complex systems and application/infrastructure interdependencies in real-world enterprise and service provider environments. Few, if any, other solutions are designed to bring IT and business components and processes together in a single unified model—except as a labyrinthine and often disjointed consulting effort.

However, as the dialog above shows, Accretive’s value is optimized for long-term predictive and what-if planning versus all the specifics governing device-specific remediation. Moreover, Accretive’s mathematical versus statistical method in its modeling clearly places it in an advantaged position vis-à-vis most other operations-centric analytic tools.

Accretive’s challenges going forward are well described above. However, EMA is optimistic that as the company and its X-Act Platform continue to evolve and gain critical mass in deployments, its value will become more apparent to enterprise and service provider environments seeking a truly unified approach to IT and business transformation.

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About EMA

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that provides deep insight across the full spectrum of IT and data management technologies. EMA analysts leverage a unique combination of practical experience, insight into industry best practices, and in-depth knowledge of current and planned vendor solutions to help its clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise line of business users, IT professionals and IT vendors at www.enterprisemanagement.com or blogs.enterprisemanagement.com. You can also follow EMA on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#). 2623.030613