

The Portal Guy

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Columns

Q&A

Hello. I'm the Portal Guy. While those who know me might snidely suggest this column is just another way to avoid honest work, I want to reassure you -- we're here to talk about one thing: Portals.

You see, I love portals. I'm a portal junkie. When I was a small child, I begged my parents to give me a portal for Christmas. Sure, there are other Portal People out there -- but they're mostly interested in those dime-a-dozen, standard everyday portals (like Yahoo). Not me. I'm interested in the Arnold Schwarzeneggers of portals; if portals were cars, I'd be driving a Monster Truck Portal (MTP). Sadly, those who lack imagination tell me I should call them Enterprise Information Portals (EIP). Boring, but true. It's the burden of an artist in a world of philistines...

So, since I want to be portally politically correct, I'll call them EIPs. They give users inside and outside the firewall access to staggering amounts of enterprise information. A much smarter person than I suggested they be viewed as offering hundreds of tiny little doorways to structured and unstructured information -- everything you need to make better business decisions. All that's required to enter each room is a key.

With the right key, you can uncover all sorts of data -- perhaps even figure out what that slacker in the cube next to yours does for a living. But data alone does not a business genius make. Users, you see, are ambitious little devils -- they're either clawing their way to the top or figuring out how many office supplies they can stuff in their pants before leaving for home.

The ones who are doing the clawing naturally want to make the most of your EIP -- it makes them look good and incidentally helps your organization steal market share from your competitors. But almost no one can make much sense of raw data (except maybe Spock in that episode where Kirk got stabbed by the blue guy). Users need tools to help them analyze. Otherwise they'll end up stuffing your EIP data in their pants and taking it home to line the bird cage.

I could go on and on about portals and how to make the most of them. But unfortunately, I'm out of space. And no, the Portal Guy won't leave you hanging; there's plenty more to come on these subjects. My pledge (holding my hand over my heart now) is to help you find, implement and enjoy the best darn EIP available. It's possible we'll have a little fun doing it.

Here's my offer. Want a Portal Guy T-shirt? (Who wouldn't?!) Send me a pointer to a great portal site or ask me a great Portal Guy question. If your Portal Pointer or Question finds its way into this column, you'll get your very own Portal Guy T-shirt. This, I might add, is not available in stores, or even through one of those insipid infomercials you're forced to watch when you've got insomnia.

Or you can always take the Portal Challenge and find out which Enterprise Information Portal is perfect for your organization or size up the features in the portals you may be looking to deploy -- and win fabulous, immensely valuable prizes, too!

COMING SOON: We dissect the ultimate Poultry Portal! And talk about serious stuff like portal security...