PC

digiMine Services

BY TROY DREIER Smaller companies looking to avoid big start-up costs should consider digiMine, whose founders believe that analytics tools should cost no more than what you'd pay for a full-time IT professional to generate the same data. Prices start at $7,500 per month and vary by the amount of data sent to digiMine, as well as the complexity of information requested.

Another tenet of digiMine is that companies who install their own analytics systems often don't invest the skill and effort required to maintain a data warehouse properly: You're better off letting digiMine—the experts—do it for you. Consequently, it's a hosted service, so almost no work is performed on the clients' system.

Installation is quick and handled remotely. Customers need to install a 322K Slurper on their Web server that gathers Web site transaction information, encrypts and compresses it, then sends it to digiMine's main system at scheduled times, usually in the slow, late-night hours. digiMine asks for 6 hours to process information, so data sent at midnight is ready at 6 A.M. The Slurper can also collect data from any OLE DB-compliant database and on a variety of platforms, including Windows NT, Windows 2000, Unix, Linux, and Macintosh WebObjects Server.

digiMine massages the raw data and generates reports, which can be viewed using any browser. Report topics include the number of visitors to a site, the pages visited most often, the duration of visits, geographic breakdowns, and top referral URLs. These intuitive reports provide both the raw numbers for a given topic, as well as graphs. Viewers are limited to the reports available, but digiMine management says it adds new functionality about every six to eight weeks.

Besides these basic usage graphs, digiMine offers other, more specific reports. Funnels show how many users successfully navigated multipage processes. For example, a funnel report could show how many users completed a long registration procedure and how many dropped out at each page. Funnels can also show how many customers successfully completed an order, pointing out problem pages that should be redesigned. Clients can create up to 20 funnel reports.

digiMine also includes data mining services, such as customer segmentation, in which digiMine looks for clickstream and purchase patterns among site visitors, then lets the Webmaster or marketing professional study each pattern and assign a segment name to it. Data mining patterns could also show the number of people who visited only one page as well as items that were typically purchased together, so that companies can exploit cross-sell or upsell strategies. By studying these patterns, companies can better understand how visitors use their site, then play off those strengths. Data mining is an extremely useful tool for understanding customer behavior, and we were surprised to see it included in a lower-cost service such as digiMine.

Information that is sent to digiMine from the Slurper is protected with 128-bit public key encryption. Clients need to log on to digiMine in order to view reports, providing a password, account name, and company name. The administrator can set report access privileges for an unlimited number of employees, and the reports available can be individually restricted.

With its strategy of maintaining a data warehouse for you, digiMine can keep your data organized to produce useful analytic reports and—just as appealing—to keep costs down.