




DATABASE BY DESIGN, INC.

Can we talk?

Get your systems talking to improve your net profits

Are you set up to maximize your net profitability?

Many organizations have database systems that store much of their important information. However, they are not set up to manage information productively. For example:

-  The organization has several computer programs that manage important data, but none of the programs talk with each other to exchange information.
-  A large database system exists within the organization, but the technology team either can't or won't expand the program to meet the growing needs of the organization.
-  The organization has a database driven web site, but it is maintained as a separate system and doesn't interact with the organization's main database.

Inefficiencies can lower profitability in the following ways:

- ▶ Data must be entered into different systems multiple times, wasting valuable time.
- ▶ No way to get a complete picture of all information.
- ▶ Web site enhancements fall short of expectations because there is no continuity.
- ▶ Time spent on data input and analysis could be better used on sales and client retention.
- ▶ Functionality can't be added to meet changing business conditions.

Improvement Options:

What do you do if you are in this situation? Resolve to get your systems talking to increase efficiency and profitability. Review your computer program documentation and product web sites to find options that are available for transferring information to and from other programs. Compare your results with those below to find out how you can improve your situation:

X No Connectivity Options	✓ Export to Text Capability	✓ Direct Connections
If one of your computer programs provides no opportunities to exchange information, this may be a good time to look into getting a replacement program.	If your program has the ability to import and export the information in it to a text file, you can use these files to load the information into other programs. This should be a minimum requirement for any program that you purchase. Even though this option enables you to transfer information without reentering the data, it requires a manual process to transfer data. As information is updated on one system, it does not automatically update others. Thus, timely updates can be difficult to achieve.	Some programs allow other programs to connect directly to them to exchange information. This is the best option. As a result, information is updated in a timely manner and your programs operate together.

How Do I Make My Improvements?

If you have programs that have some sort of exchange capability, as shown above, the next step is to automate the exchange. There are three main methods used to exchange the information. The method that you use will depend upon the capabilities of your programs. In order to automate the

exchange, each method requires an additional program to be created that acts as a 'Managing Database'. This additional program would be designed to handle the exchange of information. Each method is described below:

Method of Improvement	Process of Exchange	Benefits
Export to Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs are directed to export their information, usually by a user of the program. • The 'Managing Database' opens export files and reads the contents. • The 'Managing Database' makes any necessary modifications to the data for the other programs. • The 'Managing Database' creates a new data file for import into the other programs that need the information. • The programs that are to receive the information are instructed to import the converted data files. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data is entered just one time. • The information that is being exchanged is optimized for transfer by the 'Managing Database' which results in less time needed to perform the exchange.
Direct Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'Managing Database' opens a connection to each program via ODBC or other communication protocols. • The 'Managing Database' monitors the program for changes to its information. • Changes are copied to other programs that need the updates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data is entered just one time. • The information that is being exchanged is optimized for transfer by the 'Managing Database' which results in less time needed to perform the exchange. • Updates are available to all systems immediately.
Central Access Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'Managing Database' opens a connection to each program via ODBC or other communication protocols. • Instead of using the different systems, the 'Managing Database' is used for entry of the information. • The 'Managing Database' sends the information to the appropriate program for storage. • Changes that are made in the other programs are also copied and transferred to the programs that need the updates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data is entered just one time. • The information that is being exchanged is optimized for transfer by the 'Managing Database' which results in less time needed to perform the exchange. • Updates are available to all systems immediately. • There is only one place to go for all information instead of using multiple systems. • Information is linked across systems so the data is more meaningful. • You can leverage your existing systems without 're-inventing the wheel'. • Each of the systems act as one. • You now have the ability to add functionality without affecting existing systems.

Are your computer systems offering you productivity that leads to maximum profitability? If you would like some help to assess options for optimizing and automating your computer systems, we would be happy to be a resource for you. At Database by Design, Inc., we can make your information work for you!

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Next Month's Topic: Deep Data Diving - Use information to service your clients.