

IBM InfoSphere Information Server

IBM

IBM is an American multinational technology and consulting corporation, with headquarters in New York but with a global presence. It manufactures and markets computer hardware and software and offers infrastructure, hosting and consulting services in areas ranging from mainframe computers to nanotechnology. The company was founded in 1911 and over the years has grown through acquisition into its present state. IBM initially made its profits largely from selling hardware but, these days, is more of a software solutions and services company covering storage, security, process, development, operations etc. - and IBM Global Services. It currently stresses the delivery, from smarter computing, technology and process, of better business outcomes for the smarter planet.

It has considerable original research capabilities and is responsible for many computer science innovations from relational database theory (see for example, E. F. Codd's 1981 ACM Turing Award Lecture) to advanced semi-AI computers that offer cognitive computing capabilities. IBM has recently described cognitive computing as "the third era of computing".

InfoSphere Information Server is IBM's data integration platform. It supports the whole spectrum of use cases for data integration including application to application integration, B2B integration, ETL (extract, transform and load) and ELT for moving data from one environment to another (from operational systems to a data warehouse is the classic case, nowadays including moving data into Hadoop), data migration and SaaS (software as a service) implementations. In this latter case IBM offers specific capabilities with regard to some third party applications, notably Salesforce.com.

There are also specific editions of InfoSphere Information Server, including; InfoSphere Information Server Enterprise Edition, InfoSphere Information Server Enterprise Hypervisor Edition, InfoSphere Information Server for Data Integration, InfoSphere Information Governance Catalog, and InfoSphere Information Server for Data Quality (which provides data profiling and data cleansing capabilities). There are also editions for data warehousing and for SAP implementations. We are slightly surprised that there is no particular edition for data migration and/or archiving, where you would probably require IBM InfoSphere Discovery

Company details

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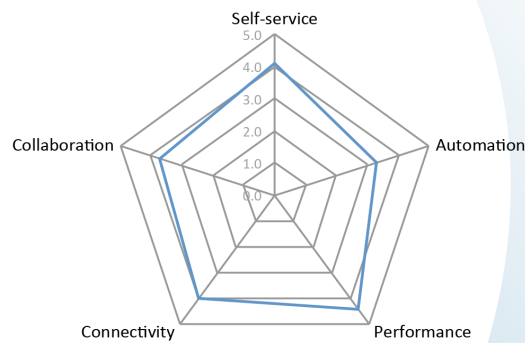


Figure 1: Requirements (scale 0 to 5)

as opposed to IBM Information Analyzer, which you get in the Information Server for Data Quality Edition. However, we understand that InfoSphere Discovery and Information Analyzer will be merged during the course of 2015, which will make this unnecessary.

Markets and Channels

IBM delivers InfoSphere Information Server through its global direct sales force.

Users

As a product that is around 20 years old (InfoSphere DataStage, as it was then, was originally developed by Ardent, which was acquired by Ascential, which in turn was acquired by IBM) there are thousands of users of InfoSphere Information Server and there are a number of case studies published by IBM on its web site, including the company's own implementation in the office of the CIO, as well as banking customers, universities and others.

Product Sheet

Technology

Perhaps the most significant aspect of InfoSphere Information Server, outside its role of physically moving and transforming data at scale (including big data integration and grid deployments), is the extent to which it plays a part in information governance. Thus the product includes the ability to define governance policies and rules, a data governance dashboard, integration with InfoSphere Master Data Management, Blueprint Director (used to model and view the integration and governance architecture) and the Information Governance Catalog (previously Business Information Exchange), which provides a business glossary and metadata workbench. There is also a new lineage viewer.

Alongside core capabilities (for example, new connectors to the cloud) the emphasis in the data integration market at present is very much on self-service capabilities, just as the same is true for business intelligence. InfoSphere Information Server provides this with InfoSphere Data Click, which is a simple web-based interface for on-demand integration, both between conventional sources but also for access data lakes (integration with Hadoop is built into the product). However, self-service is not only about the user experience, it is also about automating functions that underpin what the user can do. Thus, for example, Information Server supports the idea that you can move data into, say, an IBM data warehouse using ETL at one time of the day and ELT at another time of the day. However, this has to be manually scheduled and it would be preferable if there was an optimiser built into the product to automate this and other processes. We understand that such an optimiser is planned. We should also add that this is not a criticism—other vendors in this space do not, typically, have even the existing level of automation that IBM provides. Other self-service capabilities include smart hover (which provides contextual details about an asset when you hover your mouse over it) and semantic search capabilities. There are also new facilities in the latest version (11.3) to support cross-team collaboration.

Services

In addition to the normal sorts of training and support services you would expect from any vendor (which includes extensive online resources), IBM offers business services (application innovation, business analytics, business strategy, functional expertise, mid-market expertise), IT services (application management, business continuity and resiliency, data centres, integrated communications, IT strategy and architecture, security), outsourcing services (business process out-sourcing and IT outsourcing and hosting), asset recovery, hardware and software financing, IT lifecycle financing and commercial financing.



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