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Prepared by Compaq Global Services

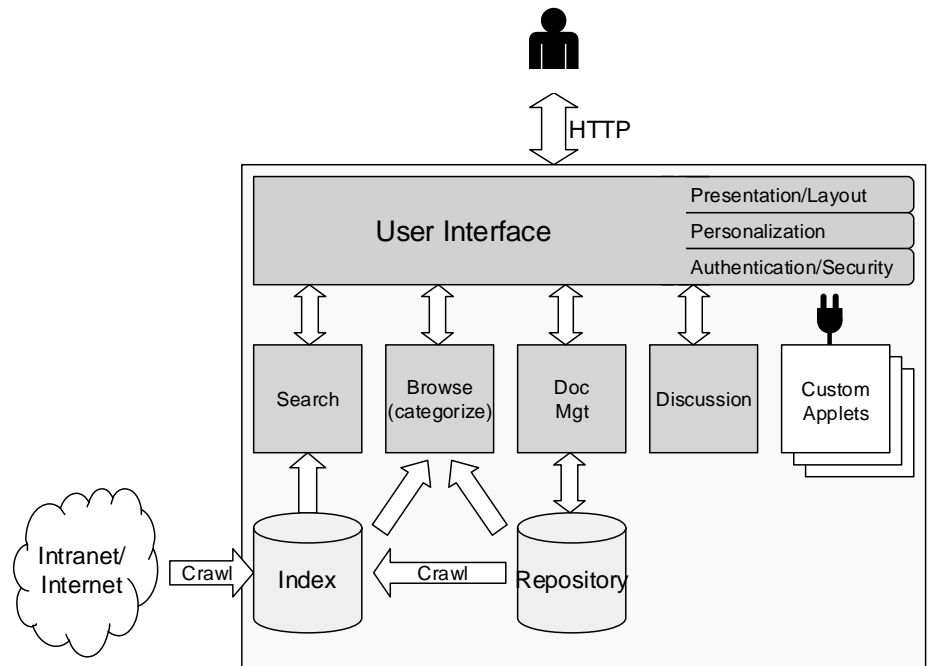
Compaq Computer Corporation

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Choosing a Portal Technology

Abstract: This paper provides an overview of enterprise portals, the technology behind them, Compaq's primary partners in the field, and how to choose between the technologies based on the customer's needs. This is not a detailed technical architecture or a development guide. It is intended to help field consultants help customers select appropriate technology based on business requirements. A separate document will discuss the detailed architecture of enterprise portals.



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Choosing a Portal Technology
Competitive Analysis prepared by Compaq Global Services

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Introduction

What is an Enterprise Portal?

An enterprise portal is a single, customized entry point into the collective information sources of a corporation or department. Unlike a traditional "home page" that provides a single view and must be maintained manually, portals offer a number of features to both maximize the value to the user and simplify content management for the maintainer.

For the User

- All work information and functions can be integrated into a single web page or set of pages.
- The user can choose what information sources are visible and how they are displayed.
- Both static content and interactive functions (such as email) can be integrated into a single interface.

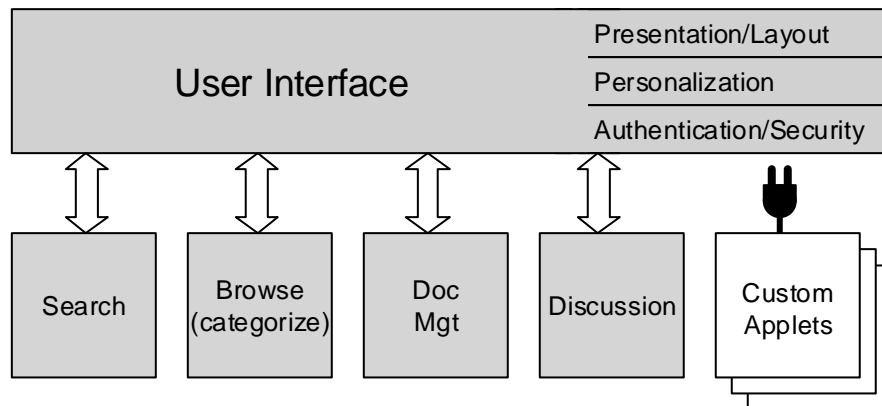
For the Maintainer

- Existing content can be "crawled" and categorized automatically.
- Security authorization and authentication are handled once by the portal for all content.
- Management responsibilities and permissions can be easily and securely delegated and maintained.

Features of Enterprise Portals

Each portal offering has a different set of features and strengths, often based on the vendor's historical business expertise. (For example, document management companies offer document management portals, whereas search engine vendors tend to emphasize the need to crawl and search existing content.) However, there is a set of features that are commonly requested of portals.

Figure 1: Common Portal Functionality



Feature	Description
User Interface Features	The portal provides consistent interaction with the user, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common presentation and layout of the content and navigation • Authentication and authorization of individual users (that is, login and logout) • Personalization of the interface and content, where each user can select what content or applications they see and how they are presented.
Search	The ability to search and index existing content from a wide variety of sources, including web sites, file shares, databases, and applications (such as Microsoft Exchange).
Browse (categorize)	The ability to sort the indexed content into categories so the information can be browsed in a logical fashion.
Document Management	The ability to manage documents on the server, including the ability to upload, revise, and delete documents; manage ownership and permissions; and, optionally, to maintain version control (checkin/checkout).
Discussion	The ability for portal users to interact in either threaded or interactive (i.e. chat) discussions.
Custom Applications	The ability to easily integrate custom applications into the portal interface, such as a corporate personnel directory or travel guidelines. In many cases, the portals come with a set of pre-packaged custom applications, such as a stock price quote or weather report, that can be easily modified

Not all portals support all functions. In fact, few if any vendors provide all of the features out of the box and when they do, their functionality may be limited. Which features your client needs, depends on their business requirements.

The following pages describe each of the Compaq Global Services' major partners for enterprise portals. The descriptions summarize the functions specific to that vendor's product, their particular strengths and weaknesses, and the best uses of their product.

Warning: Compaq Confidential

Please be aware that the information in this document makes subjective assessments of third-party products. The statements made herein are neither official statements of Compaq opinion or policy. This information is provided simply as one tool to assist in the evaluation of portal technology and should not be used in isolation.

Autonomy

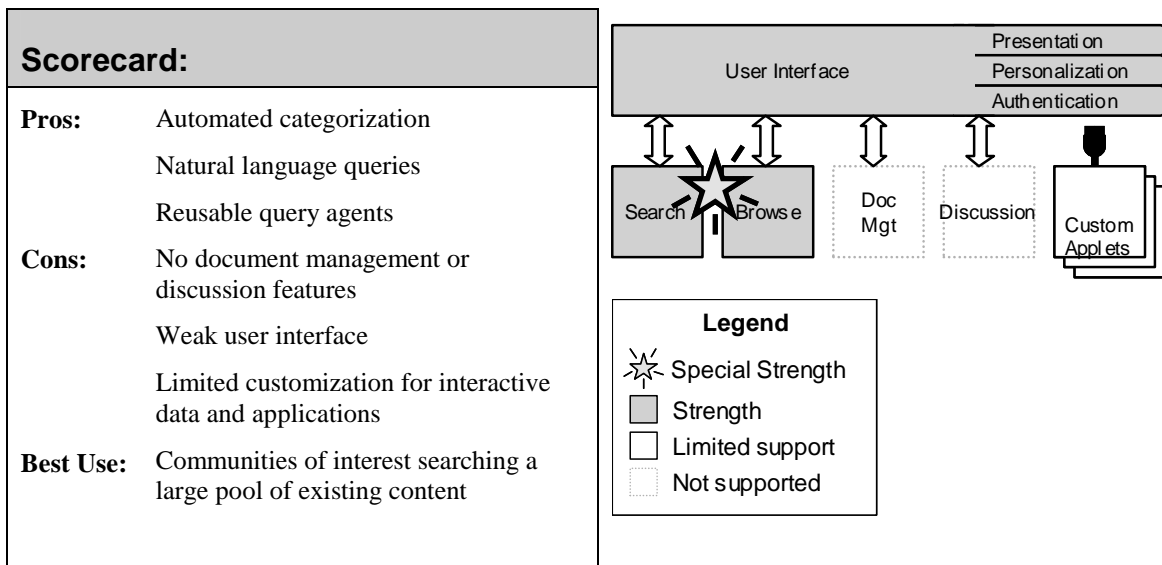


Autonomy offers a number of products, all centered around their search engine and agent technology. Their search engine is unique in that it provides automated categorization.

Unlike other search engines, the Autonomy “Dynamic Reasoning Engine” analyzes the content of the files it finds to determine how they are related and sorts them into categories established by the portal administrator. Users can then enter natural language queries (such as “How far is it from London to New York”) to find information. Search results can be refined by choosing selected “hits” and asking for more results like them. Once the user is happy with a query, they can save it as an agent. These agents are reusable and can be shared between users. In this way, Autonomy provides automated indexing that can be tuned, over time, by the users.

The advantage of the Autonomy engine is that it reduces or eliminates the task of manually creating and maintaining content categories and search filters that are needed by other portal technologies. The disadvantage is that the Autonomy products do not have many of the other features common to portals, such as document management, discussions, or easy plug-and-play for custom applets.

Autonomy products do provide basic user interface functions (such as authentication and personalization). However, the user interface out of the box is not very intuitive and will require significant modification in most cases.



KnowledgeTrack



KnowledgeTrack emphasizes document management. Unlike the other portal vendors, that support the searching and sorting of existing content outside the portal itself, KnowledgeTrack focuses on the management of content local to the server.

KnowledgeTrack provides all of the traditional document management functions: authorization, checkin, checkout, and version control. In addition, KnowledgeTrack provides threaded discussions for each document, allowing teams of authors or reviewers to collaborate directly from the KnowledgeTrack portal.

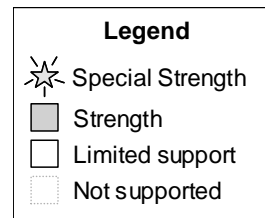
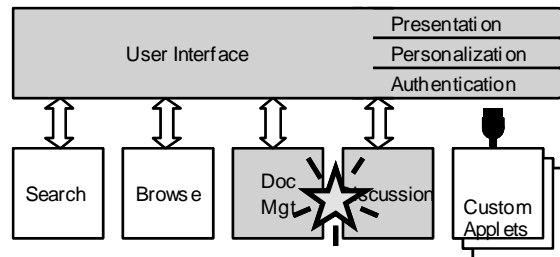
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Questions to Reviewers

The content on KnowledgeTrack is taken from press releases, and other secondhand material, not from practical experience. Those of you with practical experience using KnowledgeTrack, we would appreciate your help in answering the following questions:

- Is the material as written accurate?
- Are there other facts or considerations that should be included in this summary?

Scorecard:	
Pros:	Strong document management emphasis Discussions in support of documents
Cons:	No indexing of existing content Unclear how easy it is to plug in additional features or content into the interface
Best Use:	Document management for medium to large projects or communities



Plumtree



Plumtree’s portal offering, the Plumtree Corporate Portal, focuses on providing a broad spectrum of functions for corporate intranets. Although it can be used for smaller groups or external internet sites, its real strength is in organizing and managing existing intranets.

The two primary functions within Plumtree are:

- Searching and sorting existing content into hierarchical categories
- Integrating and managing various content sources and applications within a single interface

The Plumtree search engine lets administrators setup crawls of web sites or other data sources and then define filters by which information is sorted into a hierarchical set of folders. Users can then search or browse the document folders. Users can also upload documents into the folder hierarchy (given the appropriate permissions). However, Plumtree does not provide any other document management functions, such as checkin, checkout, or version control.

The plumtree interface focuses on providing a simple framework for adding *gadgets*: small applications or content displays. Plumtree ships with a number of sample gadgets and custom gadgets can be easily added using Active Server Page code.

Plumtree also simplifies the management of the content by allowing sections of the document hierarchy to be assigned to individual administrators. Similarly, content and gadgets can be made available or hidden on a per user basis using standard security techniques.

Although Plumtree provides a wide assortment of functions, it is missing some features and others have limitations. Plumtree does not provide any discussion functionality out of the box. They do have a strategic alliance with eRoom to provide collaboration functions. However, the connection relies on cross-links; the two products do not have an integrated interface. Plumtree’s search filters are relatively simple and managing the Plumtree searches and filters on an ongoing basis can be a labor-intensive process.

Scorecard:	
Pros:	Wide assortment of functions Easy customization for new content or functions Flexible user interface
Cons:	Filtering options are fairly basic; no complex filtering available No discussion function out of the box Limited document management
Best Use:	General purpose portal for corporate intranets

