

PUBLISHING INBOX

EXECUTIVE

A biweekly summary of news brought to you by *Publishing Executive* magazine.

Publishing Executive InBox for February 17, 2006

InBox Interview

The Scoop on Rich Data: Barry Bealer, president, CEO and co-founder of Really Strategies

What makes rich data well, rich? And what does it really mean to the publishing world? Barry Bealer, president, CEO and co-founder of Really Strategies, Lansdale, Pa., who will moderate a panel discussion called "A Strategy for Rich Data" at this year's PrintMedia/Publishing Executive Conference, March 20-22, in New York, takes time to talk about the rich data product that's not so easy to define.

InBox: What is Really Strategies and how are you connected with rich data?

Bealer: The short definition of our company is that we are technology consultants and software integrators for publishers and media companies. We offer a broad set of services, but in terms of rich data--which are generally databases that are Web accessible--we help publishers with the content management and production systems that create, manage and distribute their content in the appropriate format. Generally that format is XML, but there are other formats. This [allows] publishers and media companies to use products efficiently on the Web. This is complex because generally it's about providing reference content and creating relationships between the content and databases. That's why it is rich data--it is all about relationships and linkages.

InBox: Why is rich data an important product for publishers?

Bealer: I think [publishers] need to leverage their digital assets more efficiently. Generally, they've been creating products that were traditionally print-bound and now they're trying to do it electronically.

The second reason is that the customers or Web site viewers are expecting a whole lot more out of the Web experience. So if I go to a Web site, and there is very thin reference content and it doesn't provide me with additional information or linkages, I generally will not stay on the Web site. But one that has robust content would be stickier. For example, you go in and read a story on climbing gear, and there happens to be related stories and related products that have been reviewed on the site as well, all of those stories and products are touch points--they are databases in the background. What publishers ultimately want to do is keep their Web site viewer longer and also somehow create a transaction.

Basically, rich data products are reference content with linkages between databases that ultimately create a transaction, whether it be an

e-commerce transaction or a transaction through which knowledge is gained.

InBox: Has the use of rich data become almost mandatory for future success these days?

Bealer: Rich data is one of those channels that publishers have to investigate to see how they can leverage the print content they have more readily. For instance, some magazines can create a rich data product out of the micro ads printed in the back. They can create a directory out of that, put it on their site and all of a sudden they've created enhanced advertising revenue and added knowledge value to subscriber.

InBox: How did rich data develop ... What does it really mean, and do you know who coined the term?

Bealer: I know that folks at American Business Media apparently have said they coined the phrase "rich data," but I'm not sure of that fact. More importantly, a lot of people are stumbling on what is the true definition of a rich data product. It means different things to different people, and you really have to look at the context and the publisher to understand what the definition is. So a magazine publisher may define rich data differently than a reference or book publisher.

We offer this description: A rich data product is one in which reference content from several sources is broken down into the smallest useful units, linked to other supporting content, and then included in productivity software. Such products are more appealing to customers than content-only or software-only products because they impact efficiency.

What I hope to accomplish through the [PrintMedia/Publishing Executive Conference] panel is a discussion about what rich data means to different people. This should stimulate an intriguing conversation and cause more publishers to think about what rich data can do for them.