

Linking legacy systems and their attached databases to new web-based applications and distributed data bases seems to be a natural way of evolution. In fact, there is very high demand of doing so ("e-commerce"). As known from reliable sources on the subject (IBM, CISCO), most relevant information still resides on legacy systems with a low degree of interconnectivity into the world of the web. However, pushing for integration of the two worlds will have a complex problem coming with it. If so, forget integration, however, is not the answer. Both market demand and the reward when doing it right make the integration too appealing. So, organizations **will** go ahead with it and **will** then be exposed to "the problem" and its ramifications.

The article tries to shed some light on the technological aspects why something that looks like an everyday technology issue could soon become a monster version of the Y2K problem. The only difference is that there will be no particular date when the bomb explodes. Rather than a big bang, the problem will gradually unfold and lead to slow suffocation. Most traditional businesses and public sector organizations will begin to suffer from it soon. When doing it right, newcomers and newstarters will have a head start over the traditional organizations. Given the high need for integration of old and new systems, the business side of the problem translates into four questions for traditional organizations:

1. How can the effect of the integration problem be eliminated, or at least reduced?
2. What options are there?
3. What are recommendable steps if one has to deal with a legacy?
4. What does it cost?

In order to understand the problem in full, and also why a handy label for it is not easy to find, some insight into the technological side is needed which will be presented in the following.
