

Executive Summary

Master data is the key for controlling company assets. Good master data generates fast return of investment. Although MDM is an excellent media for organizing master data, special skills and tools are required to maximize its potential.

InQuera's expert team has developed a broad line of tools and skills that facilitate enrichment, normalization, clustering, classification, and duplication identification. This team, their knowledge, and the tools uniquely position InQuera to offer rich and intelligent data content solutions.

There are many challenges to be discovered and met along the way, including data collection, analysis and assessment, MDM schema design, taxonomy generation, data rationalization, data import, content management, and taxonomy and data maintenance.

InQuera meets each of these challenges with taxonomists, database experts, content specialists, data entry personnel, software and content tools and systems, and profound MDM knowledge and experience. InQuera ensures that SAP System Integrators invest minimum resources and management attention while reaping maximum success.

Document Purpose

This document will provide basic information regarding the environment in which InQuera operates, the challenges it faces, the line of solutions, and will prove why InQuera's unique capabilities position InQuera as the perfect partner for MDM projects.

Macro-Environment

It is more and more apparent that Master Data is the key to controlling company assets. Good master data that provides transparency and accurate accessibility to the information, both on the sell and buy side, generates fast return of investment. Achieving this symmetry is a very demanding and very complex effort, and encounters many challenges along the way. Unfortunately, it is often revealed that the master data is not well-suited to the organization's environment until it is too late; "turning back the clock" is very costly, and frequently impossible. MDM is an excellent media for organizing the master data. In order to maximize the potential, MDM-based content management tools and skills are essential.

InQuera

InQuera, formerly the content division of A2i, Inc., was created as an independent company in the spring of 2004. InQuera uses the MDM (previously A2i's xCat) as its main tool for data management, thus giving InQuera over 5 years experience in the SAP MDM platform.

InQuera has developed a broad line of tools that facilitate enrichment, normalization, clustering, classification, and duplication identification in the MDM environment.

The ICR (InQuera Central Repository) is an MDM-based MRO catalog of over 4 million items with enriched data. InQuera has an expert team of taxonomists, content specialists, data entry, image experts, text editors, process analysts, programmers, and quality control & assurance professionals. This team, their knowledge, and the tools uniquely position InQuera to offer rich and intelligent data content solutions.

The Challenge

Data Collection

Typically, the structure of the organization's content is dispersed and scattered over various related databases forming a complex network of information. In order to analyze and assess all of the databases that contain information relevant to structure and relationships, content must be accumulated.

Data Analysis & Assessment

Once the databases have been accumulated, they should be analyzed and assessed by experts for completeness, logic, structure, codes, standards, missing information, etc. as the next essential step towards a well-structured MDM database.

MDM Schema Design

Designing master data involves vast experience in MDM and an understanding of the business processes, desired user interaction (web, behind firewall, printed catalogs), and using them, together with the analysis of the databases, as the foundation for a cost-effective implementation. A well-designed MDM schema allows for low cost of ownership.

Taxonomy Generation

Taxonomy generation is the art and science of hierarchal and topological categorization and definition of things. A taxonomy must consider both the content and the structure of the content as it is the cornerstone for classification, comparability, and search ability of the products. The taxonomy must also consider the business processes, user interaction, and scalability.

Data Rationalization

To ensure that only clean master data be managed by MDM, aggregation, cleansing, normalization, classification, attribute extraction, data enrichment, and duplicate identification must be completed prior to loading.

Data Import

Though not a real challenge, populating MDM requires in-depth knowledge of MDM import tools (e.g., Import Manager and Image Manager) and the MDM Content Manager.

Content Management

Completing the product information, for instance relationships between products (i.e., sets and their parts), linking PDFs to products, or linking drawings to attributes, requires profound knowledge and experience of the Content Manager.

Taxonomy & Data Maintenance

Scaling (be it from the incorporation of new products, the merging of new databases, or the change in the business environment) sometimes creates the need for new taxonomy or changes within the taxonomy. It is therefore imperative to adapt new data to the structure whilst maintaining consistency and completeness.

InQuera Meets the Challenges

Data Collection

- Data extraction from PDFs, multiple databases, printed literature, etc.
- Collection of all data sources so that they appear in one form.
- Done by InQuera's database experts and data acquisition team hand-in-hand with the customer.
- Using sophisticated methods and advanced tools developed by InQuera.

Data Analysis & Assessment

- Review data sources for brands, items identifiers, attributes, categories, images, etc.
- Done by database experts, content specialists, and taxonomists.
- Using InQuera's proprietary knowledge base.

MDM Schema Design

- Creation of an MDM Catalog Manager through the console.
- Done by InQuera's team hand-in-hand with the customer.
- Using the appropriate and most expedient look-up tables, flat tables, hierarchies, etc., based on InQuera's experience of more than 5 years with MDM.

Taxonomy Generation

- Taxonomy generation according to the customer's demand, international standards, or InQuera's proprietary taxonomy system (ICR).
- Taxonomy workshops according to the customer's requests and InQuera's guidelines.
- Outsourcing taxonomy maintenance services.
- Done by highly experienced and trained consultants, taxonomists, and content specialists who coordinate and execute the most suitable plan for each customer.

Data Rationalization

- Automated standardization, normalization, classification, and clustering of data, attribute extraction and identification of similar/identical items.
- Data enrichment.
- Done by InQuera's team of MDM super-users that uses the most appropriate tools, or combination thereof, for each aspect of data rationalization.
- Using data rationalization tools, including, HighClass, The Content Factory Workbench, and Text Manager, specially designed by InQuera for use with MDM.

Data Import

- Mapping between the databases and the MDM Catalog Manager.
- Done by InQuera's team of MDM super users, including data entry and content specialists, that has over 5 years experience in efficient loading.
- Using MDM Import Manager.

Content Management

- Completing the item's data with unstructured or semi-structured data, including linking images, PDFs, relationships, etc.
- Done by InQuera's data entry team who has profound experience with data.
- Using MDM and InQuera's specially designed tools for MDM (such as the Object Manager) that are designed for fast, accurate work.

Taxonomy & Data Maintenance

- Short and long-term taxonomy and data maintenance projects.
- Outsourcing services, training, and consulting for all or partial maintenance of the taxonomy or data, including hosting.
- MDM version upgrading, including verification of the upgraded catalog, and adaptation and enhancement of the data concept with the new features.
- Training and consulting on the impact of new MDM features and versions.
- Done by InQuera's organization of experts.
- Using InQuera's proprietary line of tools and systems as well as the ICR, that is continuously up-to-date with the MDM versions.

Value Generation

Implementing an MDM project is not a trivial task and requires unique skills and tools in order to accomplish it to the customer's full satisfaction. InQuera generates value to SAP System Integrators by providing a complete line of MDM-compatible skills, experience, content, and software tools that ensure that SAP System Integrator invest minimum resources and management attention while reaping maximum success.

Differentiation

The main aspect that separates InQuera from others is the fact that InQuera is the only company in the world with real experience with MDM projects.

- Over 5 years experience with MDM (formerly xCat)
- Tens of customers in the Product Content Management field
- Vast practice in implementing MDM projects
- QA SAP partner, for MDM
- Supporting, consulting, and participating in recent MDM projects:
 - * United Stationers
 - * GE Security
 - * GE Lighting
 - * Rexnord

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