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CFO Can Automate CIO Watchdog Tool . . .

Opinion by [Mark Hall](#)

APRIL 19, 2004 ([COMPUTERWORLD](#)) - . . . in the first quarter of 2005, when Centrata Inc. in Redwood City, Calif., plans to ship Version 4 of its Service Catalog, which will add analytics specifically for chief financial officers to sniff around IT project metrics to ensure that CIOs are properly serving business units and the overall company. That might seem downright harsh to you CIOs who are the primary users of today's 3.0 version of the software. After all, you've shelled out somewhere between \$2 million and \$3.5 million for the Centrata Service Catalog to standardize and automate the delivery of IT services to business units and manage projects from cradle to grave. If a company division needs a new mail server, a business unit manager opens Service Catalog, decides what he wants, then out spits a detailed "statement of work," which Centrata CEO Venkat Raju claims is more detailed than your everyday request for proposal. Not only does the statement include the basic RFP specifics on hardware, software and labor costs, but it also covers commitments on deployment schedules, long-term support and even end-of-life projections and costs. The whole shebang. Next year, your CFO will get a raft of metrics based on Service Catalog to see if you're as efficient as you claim. Of course, you could always skip the upgrade.



Keith Fletcher of Lowe Enterprises Inc.

Beta work leads to alpha advantage . . .

. . . for Lowe Enterprises Inc., a Los Angeles-based national real estate developer. Keith Fletcher, senior vice president for information systems, says he got "an early, early beta" of Microsoft Office System and put it into production. Daring? Crazy? Would you do that with a Microsoft product? Maybe you should. Fletcher says that by the time Microsoft finally released the product last year, he was already saving around \$100,000 just by reducing the number of Exchange servers needed. More important, he was able to roll out a custom application quickly to his real estate acquisition team. Each land deal, he says, runs in the range of \$20 million to \$30 million. With the customization his staff did with Office System, Fletcher says the company

can probably handle two or three more deals a year because of better information management and access. By this summer, he says, another customized application will be ready for all of Lowe's real estate managers. There are downsides to depending on a product still in beta, though. "We had no final documentation until after Microsoft shipped" the final release, he says. A more subtle problem, Fletcher points out, is that end users haven't heard about the new product in the media or by word of mouth, so it lacks validation in their minds. "You have to sell it harder internally," he advises. The upside? "We're way ahead of the competition," Fletcher claims.

Get out of your car and onto your keyboard . . .

... and maybe conduct a little official business online by joining Raindance Communications Inc.'s Earth Day effort this week to cut back on the 250 million hours per month that white-collar workers waste driving to and from local meetings. And you can join for free on April 22, Earth Day, by being among the first 1,000 companies to sign up for the Louisville, Colo.-based vendor's Raindance Meeting Edition for Web, audio and multipoint videoconferencing. Chief Marketing Officer Brian Burch says services like Raindance's are widely used to cut down on interstate travel and hotel costs. However, what he calls "the hidden commute" of local white-collar business trips is not only expensive and time-wasting, but it's bad for the air, too. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, its Best Workplaces for Commuters program annually saves 35 million gallons of gas and cuts 2,000 tons of nitrous oxide and 500,000 tons of carbon dioxide from the skies. So, get online and off the road.

Once is more than enough . . .



The OneSign appliance from Imprivata Inc.

... when you need to sign onto your company network and all your applications, if you use the OneSign appliance from Imprivata Inc. in Lexington, Mass. The rack-mounted device uses the proprietary Application Profile Generator (APG), which learns each and every packaged, custom or Web app's access process and combines that information with your user-

rights profiles in Active Directory or other LDAP directories to identify and authenticate users. You simply load a lightweight client on users' PCs and let them log into their applications once, and the APG takes over for every subsequent log-on process. Version 2 of the software adds shared workstation features for multiple users and will be available next week. Pricing starts at \$20,000.

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