



## Government, Please

Pentaho pact brings Carahsoft's open source options straight to Uncle Sam

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There's an emerging trend among government agencies to consider open source software--and astute VARs are in line for a piece of the action. Carahsoft Technology Corp. (VARBusiness 500 No. 242) and Pentaho Corp., have announced a partnership that will make the government reseller the exclusive General Services Administration (GSA) Schedule distributor for U.S. Government organizations that choose Pentaho's Open BI Suite for business intelligence.

"We're a master government aggregator," said Craig Abod, president of Carahsoft, Reston, Va. "We represent Red Hat [Inc.] and have built a government practice around open source. There is a lot of inertia now for government agencies to look at open source. ... Red Hat has done a lot to convince governmental agencies that open source can be deployed in mission-critical environments."

It wasn't that long ago that open source software was viewed askance by both enterprise and government agencies alike. While they puzzled over security issues, smaller companies embraced open source as a less expensive and effective alternative to proprietary solutions.

"In reality, it's the lowest risk you can go with," said Matt Vitale, executive vice president of worldwide sales at Pentaho, Orlando, Fla. "You don't need millions of dollars down, and you're not forced to work with a company where you can't see the code."

Business intelligence products, once centered around retail use, have found a place in the government arena, proving invaluable when fulfilling reporting requirements, measuring requirements and issuing mandates on tracking. BI helps users get access to the required data, pull it for analysis and engage report findings.

"The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration] uses [Pentaho's Open BI suite] for data integration for devices in the radiological health group," Vitale said.

What made Pentaho attractive as a vendor to Carahsoft was its previous experience in the government sector.

"Pentaho ... seems to have [reached] critical mass," Abod said. "It has enough paying customers to make us believe the company has longevity."

The Naval Air Systems Command recently put the Pentaho Open BI Suite to use within its Military Flight Operations Quality Assurance Program, a knowledge management process that uses flight data to provide information on various aspects of pilot and aircraft performance.

The Navy turned to Pentaho because it knew an open source solution could be implemented more cost effectively and quickly than a traditional one.

"It was exciting because of the velocity of deal," Vitale said. "We literally had first contact with the customer to the deal closing in 34 days. The customer had looked at proprietary, legacy products, like Oracle [Corp.]'s Hyperion and [those by] Business Objects (NSDQ:BOBJ ). When they got back the bids, there was shell shock. At the last minute it was, 'Oh my, we have to find an alternative--fast.'"

Overall, the number of downloads monthly has also been impressive, Abod noted, and the Navy wasn't the only prospect checking out Pentaho's product. In fact, Vitale said the Pentaho software suite is downloaded 100,000 times a month.

"The value of any open systems solution," he added, "is [that] they could download it and look at it before reaching out to us."

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