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Why is a Database Important for a Growing Business?

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Introduction

Databases are made to store, manage and retrieve bits of information (these bits of information are called 'data').

At the very heart of a database is a table, or a number of tables. You can think of a database as similar to a spreadsheet (like Microsoft Excel) in that the data is stored in tables.

Like Excel, databases tables have columns and rows. In a database, each table has a name so they can be identified. Here is a sample table called "Ferraris in Australia":

Ferraris in Selected Cities in Australia			
City	State	Population	Number of Ferraris
Sydney	NSW	4,500,000	563
Melbourne	VIC	3,850,000	389
Adelaide	SA	1,200,000	94
Perth	WA	1,600,000	116

So this begs the question...

Why can't I just use a spreadsheet then?

Databases are significantly more powerful than spreadsheets in the way they are able to process or 'manipulate' data. Actions that would be extremely difficult or impossible in a spreadsheet are easily achievable in a database. Here are some examples:

- Retrieving all records that match certain criteria
- Update records in bulk
- Cross-reference records in different tables
- Perform complex aggregate calculations
- Handling and processing large amounts of data

As of 2009, a Relational Database is the standard in business computing.

Difference between Databases: Desktop and Server Databases

Desktop databases offer an inexpensive, simple solution to many less complex data storage and manipulation requirements. An example of a desktop database is Microsoft Access. Desktop databases are usually single user and not suitable for a business once it has reached a certain size.

Server databases, such as Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle and IBM DB2, offer businesses the ability to manage large amounts of data efficiently, and in a manner that enables many users to access and update the data simultaneously. When a business reaches a certain size – it is inevitable that a server database will be required.

A server database is an example of an 'enterprise level' database, meaning it can handle the needs of a big company. They have many advantages over Desktop Databases:

Flexibility – Server-based Databases are very 'software developer friendly', meaning that you can build a wide variety of robust business applications (like Accounting software, Service Management Software etc).

Performance – Much more powerful than desktop databases. Server-based databases will run on any reasonable hardware platform and WILL NOT SLOW DOWN as you keep adding data. If you've ever used an accounting program like MYOB or Quickbooks, which use a desktop database, you will know exactly what happens when you have a big database (ie. it SLOWS DOWN and becomes virtually unusable).

Scalability – this attribute goes hand-in-hand with the previous one. If you're willing to provide the necessary hardware resources, server databases can easily handle a rapidly expanding amount of users and/or data. This is crucial as your business grows – the normal procedure during growth periods is to employ staff (and the size of data you are handing will be increasing as well).

Summary: Databases are Extremely Useful for Small and Medium Businesses

Until recently, applications like Accounting/ERP and Business Management Software using Server Databases have had hefty price tags. Now, small and medium businesses (SMB) have an alternative to the 'big' ERP Accounting packages.

An example of an enterprise-level Australian Accounting Software that is affordable for SMB is Jim2 Business Engine from Happen Business. Jim2 is built using the Server-based Microsoft SQL Database – therefore it enjoys all the benefits that Microsoft SQL brings – security, speed, flexibility and the ability to grow as your business grows.

For more information on Jim2 Business Engine, please call 02 9570 4696 or visit our website at www.happen.biz

About Happen Business

Happen Business is 100% Australian owned and was established in 1999 to fill a growing need in the market for a comprehensive accounting and business workflow software solution.

The company rapidly established a strong following for its Jim2 Business Engine software, and now has an extensive customer base in diverse industries such as managed print services, IT, importing, distribution and warehouse, sales and service, specialised retailing and manufacturing.

Happen Business offer three tailored ERP/Accounting packages for Australian Business:

• Jim2 Business Engine Premium Edition

• Jim2 Business Engine Managed Print Services Edition

• Jim2 Business Engine Managed Services Edition

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