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byteLaunch Case Study: Migrating SharePoint lists to a SQL database

About the Company

America Buys Foreclosures is a nationwide asset management company based in Irvine, California. To effectively manage their website, they chose to build it around Microsoft SharePoint.

The Challenge

Although Microsoft SharePoint list do allow for non-technical users to quickly manage and share data, it's not as effective of a management tool for users, groups, or content compared to a relational database requiring intricate relationships.

SharePoint also requires much more overhead than a traditional database. The effects of this can be seen in decreased performance of producing custom lists, i.e. querying data, in SharePoint from Microsoft IIS.

Lastly, although SharePoint does offer flexibility, it does not require the definition of key database table attributes such as PRIMARY KEYS or INDEXES.

One of the biggest problems that America Buys Foreclosures ran into was managing the data and linking separate SharePoint lists. Because of the lax table attribute requirements, it was difficult to identify the primary key for each table. Without this *relationship*, it was difficult to keep track of users and their progress.

The Solution

To offer greater scalability, database transactions, and the handling of complex data relationships, a traditional relational database should be used to store website information.

One of the greatest challenges in this solution was to develop a relationship between the lists where one did not previously exist. Even though we wrote custom scripts to analyze this information and automate the process to a large extent, it still took a great effort to ensure the data we were migrating from SharePoint lists to SQL Server database tables were accurate and correct.

In the SharePoint database, if records were updated or deleted, the updates did not cascade to all the related items which existed in other SharePoint lists. Many incomplete records were found during the migration process.

The Result

After migrating America Buys Foreclosures database from SharePoint to SQL Server, we immediately had greater flexibility to run complex reports. The result of this created a much more powerful environment to manage individual website users, passwords, and contact information.

SharePoint has a performance threshold of approximately 2,000 records. The same limitations do not exist within SQL.

SharePoint does offer some terrific features, and it can be integrated into any corporate intranet or website. However because SharePoint does not require the implemented list to be developed with a relational approach in mind, it should only be used to compliment an existing, more traditional system.