

Andy Palmer, CIO and SVP, Infinity Pharmaceuticals. *Structured vs. Unstructured Search – a lesson from the front lines of biopharmaceutical*

As a well-funded start-up, the company had the luxury of being able to dictate employee norms for professional practices. One such edict was insistence that all chemists and biologists use electronic notebooks. Even top scientists who were reluctant were deemed a “poor fit” for Infinity and were discouraged from joining the company.

Their automation activity is being driven toward Knowledge Capture for Decision Support, quickly testing and eliminating candidate compounds. After much experimentation with a variety of software tools, they have settled on CambridgeSoft’s lab notebook system. It deploys Web forms for the user interface; data capture and has good drawing tools that the scientists are comfortable with for drawing compound diagrams.

The environment is Web Services > GAML format > Lab Notebook. The e-lab notebooks are for the molecular chemists, and others use a process more like document management for capturing their information. They have partnered with some 3rd parties to get as close to optimizing internal scientific collaboration as they can, and integrating the science with business, and integrating biology and chemistry. The latter is difficult because the terminology on the biology side is much more variable and unstructured than on the chemistry side.

They have taken the approach that “people are going to do what they are going to do” but when they want to change or influence behavior, they spend time and effort aligning expectations with the organization’s. Everything must be searchable, and as appealing as Google is to many, it can’t do e-Room indexing.

They employ a taxonomy to index the results of what anyone searches. They look for tools that are adaptable to their environment (e.g. extensions of Office). They work to enable users to leverage locally defined taxonomy to search broadly indexed information.

See also PowerPoint for [highlights](#).