

Inc., rules are created in a decision tree format, as show at the bottom of the exhibit. The end user sees a simple sequence of questions (top left on the exhibit) and eventually is presented with a simple textual response.

Intelligent Agents

Intelligent agents, which are also known as bots or software robots, use pattern matching technology to do their work. Intelligent agents are especially significant in acquiring information from the web, commercial databases, and intranets or corporate intranets. Intelligent agents, which can be resident on a PC or web based, accept user questions, convert the questions into the appropriate language, and then submit the questions to the appropriate search engines. The intelligent agents then remove duplicates, place the results in a standard format, and rank order the results.

Most intelligent agents accept natural language input. The pattern matching technology that makes this possible is *natural language processing* (NLP). In addition to being useful in automatically formulating queries for search engines, NLP front ends can make database front ends more user friendly.

Database Tools

Databases, which provide a Knowledge Management system's long-term memory, have a variety of names, depending on their structure, contents, use, and amount of data they contain. Database tools form the basis for storing and retrieving business intelligence about what has happened in the company, which can then form the basis for future predictions. For example, a *data warehouse* is a central database, often very large, that can provide authorized users with access to all of a company's information. Data warehouses usually contain data from a variety of noncompatible sources.