



VIEW500

IDENTITY MANAGEMENT AND XML
DIRECTORY SERVICES SOLUTIONS

White Paper: View500's Alternate Hierarchies Functionality

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Credentials

eB2Bcom is the owner and developer of the renowned View500 directory technology. This technology has some unique features, and is deployed in Government, Defence, and private sector companies throughout the world.

Introduction

This white paper describes the process used for View500 to support a functionality that once given minimal data can derive hierarchical views that are different from the stored hierarchy.

What is Alternate Hierarchies?

Alternate Hierarchies are a concept more than a technology in their own right. By leveraging data that exists in most organisations, we can derive other ways of looking at the same personnel.

Most directory systems will come across the same problem during their design phase. What should the directory hierarchy represent? Some examples are:

- A flat structure – Easy to manage but not very useful when viewed by users.
- A hierarchy based on physical location.
- A hierarchy based on the department people belong to.
- A combination of the previous two: Physical structure for the first level then org structure at each physical location.

The main idea behind Alternate Hierarchies is to offer a number of different structures from a single set of data.

An example of this is a structure as detailed below:

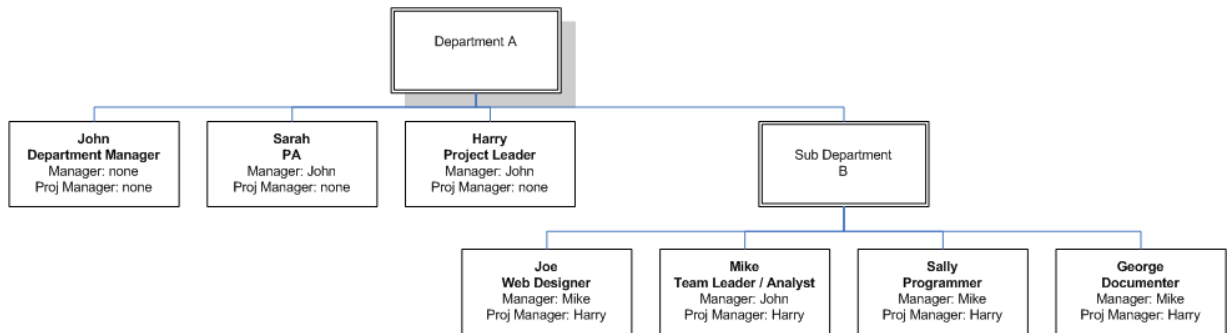


Figure 1 – The default hierarchy

This can also be represented as:

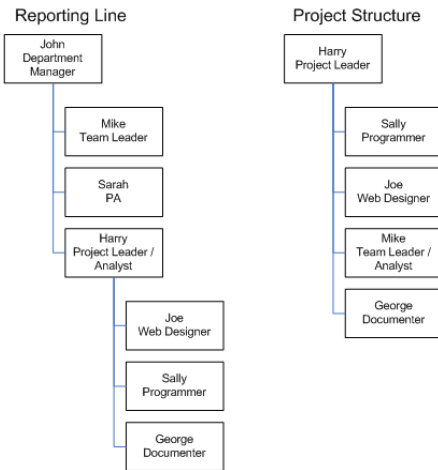


Figure 2 – Alternate Hierarchies

As seen by the project structure, not every entry needs to be included and in some cases there may be several fragmented structures.

System Requirements

The requirements are quite simple in technical terms but can be a little complex to manage. For each structure that you wish to represent, there needs to be an attribute in each entry that stores a reference to the entries superior. It must store only the direct superior as that entry will also store its superior and so forth.

While this is easy to store, the management of this data grows exponentially with the number of structures to track. This load is easier to manage with automated tools (external sources of data) or by allowing users to manage their own details.

Once the data is stored in the directory, it can be displayed using a customised entry details template .

How does the process work?

In its normal form, the structures are viewed as three levels: The Superior, Focus, and Children entries. The Focus entry is in the middle of the chart ,and the levels above and below are displayed in relation to it. The superior entry is the one that is stored in the specified attribute of the focus entry.

For example, Harry the project leader has John the Department Manager as his superior. The children entries are any entry that has the focus reference in their attribute, and from our example we can see that Joe. Sally and George all reference Harry as their superior reference.

How this is displayed is up to the customer and can be represented either in customised pages graphically (as displayed above) or even as a subsection of an existing detail page.

The Benefits of Using Alternate Hierarchies

There are a number of benefits from using the alternate hierarchy displays in View500. Some of these benefits are:

- There is greater visibility for how the organisation works.
- There is less stress on the existing structure to meet every requirement in its representation of the organisation.
- There can be a non-tangible benefit to the personnel in having better clarity of their place in the organisation.
- It shows in a simple structure, data that may not be easy to comprehend in its raw form.

Conclusion

This is a technology that is easy to implement and can demonstrate a very visible enhancement to the directory environment. When combined with other technologies such as self service, it becomes simpler to manage while offering the personnel greater ownership of their data.

eB2Bcom View500 fully supports alternative hierarchies