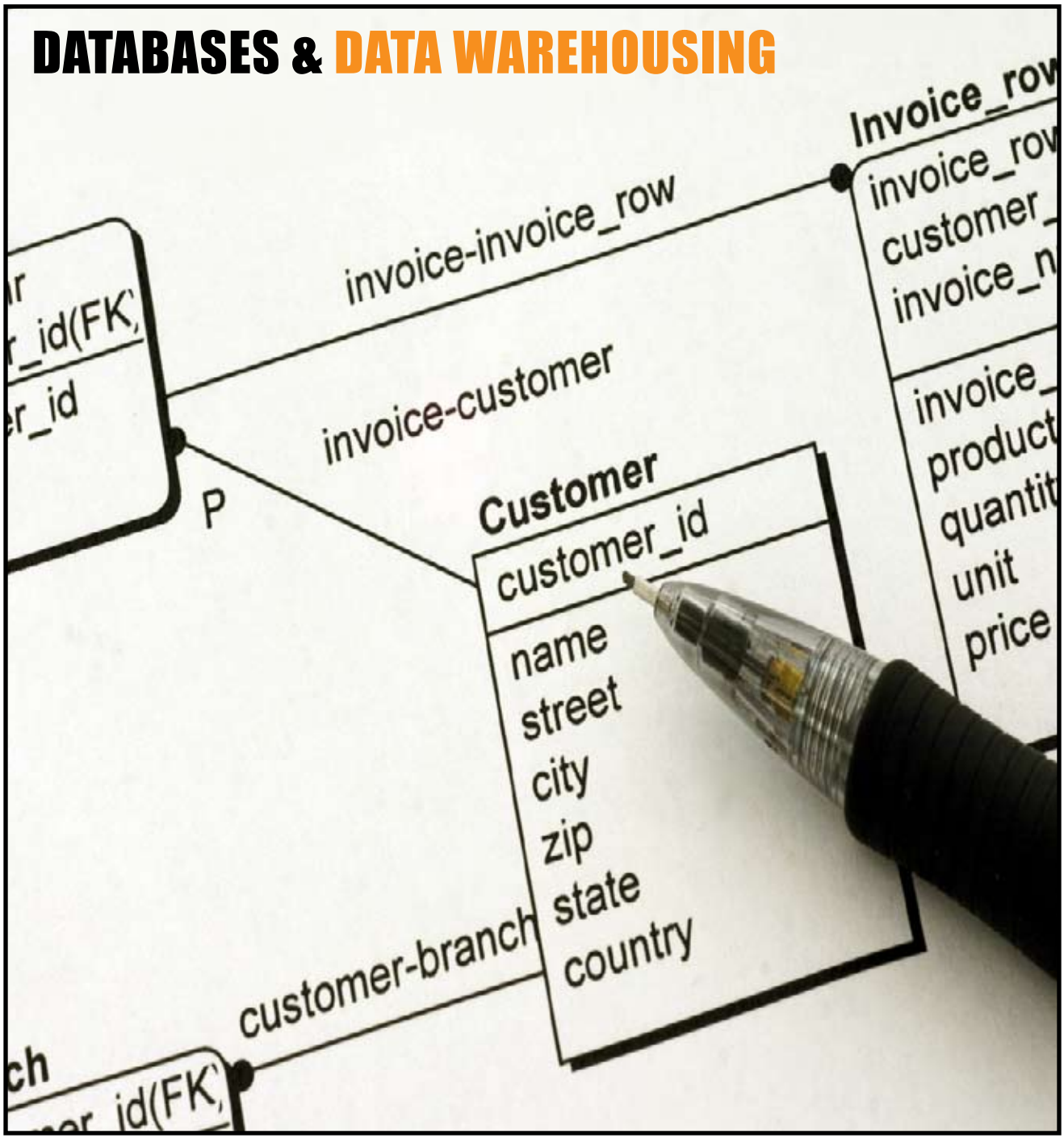
DATABASES & DATA WAREHOUSING



One of the most important assets of any company is its information. Whether it's a sole trader or a public limited company, this asset is kept in either a system of records or electronically in a database.

Whilst most databases or computer systems are designed to capture information, the purpose of the data warehouse is to make information meaningful to retrieve and answer business critical questions.

Data Warehousing provides a secure, consolidated, and integrated information repository, bringing together the right information across organisational boundaries to provide a 'single version of the truth'. It ensures that correct and trusted information is available at any time to support effective business intelligence. One of the main challenges when designing this type of environment is to ensure that it is flexible and responsive to change.

A data warehouse is not necessarily a single database, but more in terms of a managed environment supporting both large scale enterprise data repositories and smaller focused data marts required for specific types of analysis such departmental or business sector reporting and as data mining.

A data warehouse exists to answer on-going questions that people have about their business.

- *What were the best selling products/services last week, last month, last quarter or last year?*
- *What is the gross margin by product type?*
- *What is the relationship between sales and returns?*
- *What is the conversion rate between lead and appointments or appointments to sales?*
- *What is the ROI?*
- *What is the return rate by supplier?*
- *Why are returns so high for a particular product, range of products or supplier?*
- *How do stock levels compare with sales by product?*

All of the above questions are asked on a day to day basis in business, and the business question that a data warehouse is good at answering is about the overall performance of a business and not just a single transaction.

- *A data warehouse is information organised around the major subject areas of your business – this is what's called a data driven approach, E.g. Customers, Sales, Products or Suppliers.*
- *Raw data is extracted, cleansed, transformed and Summarised, then presented in a way that makes sense to business users. This is what's commonly referred to as ETL (Extract, Transform and Load).*
- *The scope of the data warehouse will change over time, reflecting the iterative nature of the data warehouse implementation process.*
- *A data warehouse provides consistent information even if a companies operational system changes.*

When designing a data warehouse an organisation must abide by the following rules:

- *A well designed data warehouse will undoubtedly achieve the best results.*
- *A badly designed data warehouse may provide initial success but will all too often provide problems in the future.*
- *The design of a data warehouse should not be constrained by available data, FORWARD THINKING is required.*
- *Always design a data warehouse as a dimensional model. This will facilitate the ability to do successful data mining, as it will answer business questions across large numbers of transactions.*

We as an organisation believe we can help you address your business information needs, from a simple data cleansing exercise to full scale data integration.

We are here to help you consolidate your many sources of information into a single source of data that can be accessed in a meaningful way, thus enabling your business to forward think to the future.

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