To Our Informix Community and Clients:

I would like to start off this letter by telling you about George Dantzig. I don't know him personally and have never had the chance to meet him, but I find his story quite interesting. George Dantzig was a student at Stanford University. Like many of us, George did not know exactly what he wanted to do with his life after school, but he was motivated and inspired to do something great. Ultimately, he decided that he wanted to start with a position on the Stanford faculty. Earning this position required that he ace his final exam. On the morning of the test, he was awakened by the sound of his roommates. He had slept through his alarm clock and was laying in bed, 20 minutes after the exam began. He ran across campus, in the clothes he wore the night before, and stormed into the test room late. When he sat down, he noticed six problems on the test and two additional problems on the board. He worked through the six problems and felt pretty good about his progress. However, as he moved to the two problems on the board, he hit a dead end. Once everyone else turned in their tests, he pleaded with the professor to give him more time to work on the two problems from the board. The professor graciously gave George until midnight to complete the problems. Come midnight, to George's dismay, he turned in his test, having only solved 1 of the 2 last questions.

The next morning George was awakened by a phone call from his professor, praising George for his incredible accomplishment. He had solved 1 of the 2 problems on the board! George did not know that when the professor passed out the test to the class, he had written 2 problems on the board, that were not possible ("not even Einstein had been able to solve them").

George did not have the knowledge (or the sense) to know what was possible that day he walked into the classroom. Said differently, he was not biased or influenced by what the so-called experts believed was possible. George believed, and delivered greatness.

As I pen this first letter to the Informix Community (our Clients, Partners, and Users), I find myself in a similar situation to George. I don't claim to be an expert in Informix or to have had a long track record with the technology (I don't!). I am not biased by the could-have's and should-have's that have littered the history of Informix (I have read about them though). However, I do have the optimism of a person that has assessed this with a fresh perspective. I believe in the promise of this technology and the business. I, along with IBM, am committed to the success of Informix. If you are willing to invest a few minutes reading this, I will share with you how we plan to invest for the growth of the technology.

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As I have spent the last few months researching, learning, and talking to many people about the state of Informix, one thing has stuck out to me: an enduring passion that has always existed for the technology. Clients love it, partners love it, users love it…everyone loves it! Coupled with this unsurpassed passion, I have had some issues raised to me. Many of the issues that I confronted were valid. Is Informix strategic to IBM? How do we increase skills around Informix? Why doesn't IBM talk about Informix more publically? How is Informix positioned in the market?

All of these are fair questions. We are focused on ensuring that each of these questions are answered with action, as opposed to merely words. In fact, our answer to these questions and others, will come in the form of a 3 year strategy for Informix, that I will outline herein.

Informix has a track record that speaks for itself going back in time and more recently. Over the past few years, Informix has been rated #1 in client satisfaction twice (2008/2009 by VendorRate) and has been awarded 56 patents for new innovation. We are proud to have received these accolades and it is a testament to the passion I mentioned before. This raises the most important question of all: Given the passion for Informix, the historical and recent success,

and the countless number of clients that continue to adopt Informix, what will IBM, and the Informix community, do to continue to drive the success of Informix in the market?

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Informix will continue to grow, as it has over the last 5 years, by preserving what made it great in the first place, while also expanding into new areas and taking a more aggressive approach in sales, marketing, and technology. There are 4 imperatives, which will be the cornerstone of our future:

Delight the install base
As mentioned above, Informix continues to impress from a client satisfaction perspective. Our current clients and users are what make Informix great. We will emphasize, in all our activities going forward, a focus on delighting our users and clients. This starts by listening, and more importantly, understanding, what is critical to our clients. We have heard requests for expanded and flexible support offerings, broader application support, and continued innovation. We agree with this feedback and have already starting executing on each of them.

Build Strategic Differentiation
We believe that it is important that we clarify where Informix is positioned in the software industry. First and foremost, Informix is positioned in the install base. Said a different way, it is simply not economical (nor appropriate risk management) for a current users to consider alternatives. In fact, I challenge anyone to show me the ROI behind a change in platform for someone that is currently running Informix. Secondly, Informix will continue to focus in the industries in which it is dominant today (telecommunications and retail) and expand our presence where we already have a strong foothold (entertainment and healthcare). Thirdly, Informix will continue to be the database of choice for embedded applications. The number of electronics, healthcare, and networking companies that continue to move to Informix is impressive. The catch is that many of you do not know this, because it is inherently invisible. Fourthly, we will continue to drive Informix as a key play in the middle-market. For middle-market companies that need an infrastructure that simply 'works', with zero administration required, Informix is a great answer.

Create a Proactive Culture
We need to re-energize the Informix community inside and outside of IBM. New offerings and clear differentiation are both steps in the right direction. However, to take this a step further, we need focused technical skills, hands-on engagement from our labs, centers-of-excellence, competitive benchmarking and greater awareness. We will turn up the volume. We need our community of partners, clients, and users to assist.

Build New Revenue Streams
Like any business, nothing is more important than your current clients. However, to continue to grow and prosper, we must move into new spaces. In line with the positioning that I described above, IBM will be placing bets in each of these areas. As we drive our focus on application support, we will start with many of the products that IBM has acquired through the years, some of which do not support Informix yet. This alone, opens up a whole new business landscape for Informix and new innovation opportunities for our clients. Further, we will triple our investment in working with clients in the embedded market. As mentioned above, this is a fertile landscape, and only IBM can bring the technology (Informix) and systems architecture skills that these clients demand. Lastly, we will ensure that the Informix product is packaged correctly, to meet the needs of our developers, mid-market clients, and enterprise clients.

Executing these 4 imperatives is not an event; it is a process that we will execute over a 3-year

period, and beyond. We believe these are the right steps to secure the future and capitalize on the growth of the last 5 years. We will take a disciplined approach to getting these done, moving as fast as we can, while not sacrificing quality or focus in all that we do.

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We are proud of Informix and grateful for our loyal community. We have not always been perfect in our execution in the past, but the business continues to grow. I know that there are still some doubters, but I would ask you to keep an open mind. I believe in what we are doing and I am confident that these are the right steps. I will be in touch with you on a regular basis. But, if you want more frequent updates on our progress, I encourage you to visit Bruce Weed's blog (***http://bruceweed.wordpress.com/***).

I encourage you all to go to http://www.iiug.org/president, and share with me any of your questions/comments. If nothing else, in the first few months of working on Informix, I have strived for transparency and openness. Anything that you share is valuable to myself and the community.

We remain committed to Informix and we are aiming to be a leader, or stay the leader, in each of the categories that I have identified. We could not do any of this without the support of the Informix Community: our Clients, Partners, and Users. The Informix community cannot be a spectator in this endeavor; we need your help in driving each of the imperatives. We thank you for your loyalty and hope that you share our optimism for the future. I am looking forward to seeing all of you at the IIUG Conference in April!

Sincerely,
Robert D. Thomas
Vice President, Information Management
IBM Software Group