A question about endian-ness turns out to be the wrong question

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Via a customer liaison, we received what seemed like a simple question: "How can I detect whether a Windows machine is big-endian or little-endian?" You could actually answer this question (say by coughing up a code fragment that stores a 16-bit value to memory and then takes it apart into bytes to see how it got stored, or by simply hard-coding it based on the target architecture you are compiling for), but you'd be making the mistake of answering the question instead of solving the problem. The customer liaison explained, "My customer is having a problem that is caused by a bug in the SAP BI connector. According to the Knowledge Base article, the problem occurs when the SAP BI server is installed on a big-endian system." Okay, with that background, we immediately recognize that the question is wrong. The problem occurs when the *SAP BI server* is running on a big-endian system. It doesn't matter what the endian-ness of the Windows machine is, so any mechanism for detecting whether the Windows machine is big-endian or little-endian is barking up the wrong tree. But it turns out that the customer never even had to do this detection at all. If you read the Knowledge Base article, it says that the problem is already fixed.

> The fix for this issue was first released in Cumulative Update 4 for SQL Server 2008 Service Pack 1.

So just make sure you're running Cumulative Update 4 for SQL Server 2008 Service Pack 1 or higher (which, if you've been making any attempt at keeping your server up to date, you've been doing for *three years*), and the problem will go away. The customer liaison thanked us for our assistance, but nevertheless asked for the code that would detect the endian-ness of the Windows system. I asked, "How will that help you solve your problem?" but before the customer liaison answered, some other people just gave the customer code that detects the machine endian-ness. Even though that will do absolutely nothing to solve the customer's problem.

That was the last we heard from the customer liaison. I'm hoping that they actually installed the service pack and solved their problem. And I'm afraid what they're going to do with that code fragment.

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