

The Western Canadian Pipeline Article

Integration the key to recession proofing your company

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Individual business processes generally exist separately in isolation from one another. Accounting, Human Resources, Inventory Control and Business Development are all department that can simultaneously exist under one roof, without ever sharing the same processes or software systems simply because of the diverse nature of each of their mandates.

Enter in Enterprise Resources Planning (ERP). The latest buzz-word in the business world, ERP involves the integration of all the above business processes and more, in order to allow every department of a business the ability to store, retrieve and compile the information it needs to run effectively, using one software system.

SAP, a leader in providing ERP solutions to companies in more than 140 distinct industries, of which oil and gas is one, has recently taken ERP to new levels by making it more accessible to small and mid-sized operations, with a software solution known as Business One.

"This is a great core product that is very broad-based and has a big degree of functionality", says Conrad Mandala, Vice President of SAP's North American division. "With it, we have been able to overlap the template used with some of our larger customer solutions and adapt it for the use of small to mid-sized companies"

"Opening up for them," says Mandala, "A Whole new business solution."

So what exactly is it that ERP solves? For one thing, says Mandala, it reduces the number of software programs a company need at any one time which in turn saves on costs.

"Most small to mid-sized companies do not have large IT departments," says Mandala. "Which makes the whole issue of purchasing multiple software programs, maintaining, updating them, as well as the training required to do so, very cumbersome."

"With Business One," continues Mandala, "All of those processes can be integrated into one software package, with unique checks and entrance points, so that data can be compiled, reports generated, and a real-time look at the status of the company can be realized."

A solution says Mandala, which in turn helps business to streamline their operations and accelerate their businesses growth worldwide. An important factor in today's economic climate, where markets, projections and currencies are constantly experiencing changes.

Customized to meet the needs of your operation, no matter what countries those operations extend to. SAP's Business One, has created partnerships with industry specific knowledge based companies, (over 200 to date). In order to help integrate your business. One such partner that specializes in the Oil and Gas Industry is VistaVu Solutions (formerly CRCS Inc.), whose highly specialized knowledge of the industry makes them capable of customizing the program to meet individual company needs rather than the company changing its processes to fit the software.

While Mandala admits that such highly comprehensive, customized integration does come at a cost, it's a cost that can vary depending on the implementation, which he illustrates by comparing the idea of software implementation with that of a home renovation project.

"If you are doing a home renovation the fastest most expensive way to get it done is to blow the entire house up and rebuild it."

"Or," he continues, "You can take a more systematic approach and blow out the back wall, without necessarily going into the structure of the home. So too, are there a number of ways to make the integration of your software system more accessible."

Streamlining your business processes can both save you money and make you money, but the one core thing it does is save you time. Time spent on multiple data entries, time spent trying to compile the data you need, and time spent managing

supplier and customer data. Time that can be better spent focused on forecasting and managing the needs of your business and the ever-changing market.

“As the economy slows down, it is more important than ever for a business to streamline their processes,” say Mandala.

“This software,” he continues. “ Allows those who use it to be proactive, rather than reactive, to the industry and the marketplace.”