

READY ACCESS TO REAL-TIME DATA HELPS SMALL BUSINESSES THRIVE

ENABLING FAST RESPONSE TO CHANGING CONDITIONS

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IMPLEMENTING A “BIG BUSINESS” ADVANTAGE

KEEPING YOUR SMALL BUSINESS COMPETITIVE

To thrive in today’s global economy, small businesses must incorporate some of the advantages formerly available only to larger firms. The most important of these advantages is anytime-anywhere access to real-time business data. With current data at their fingertips, company managers can view, analyze, and manage day-to-day business processes and respond quickly to ever-changing customer demands and market conditions.

Data visibility leads to greater efficiency, better-informed decisions, and improved responsiveness. Responsiveness, in turn, leads to satisfied customers and business partners, new and unexpected opportunities, and increased sales and market share. By improving their data visibility and responding quickly to change, small businesses gain a significant competitive advantage.

Today there is new and affordable technology that enables small businesses to access current data from any location, respond quickly to change, and thrive in a volatile business environment. A good example of this technology is the SAP® Business One application.

VISIBILITY

FROM DATA COMES INSIGHT

The term “data visibility” refers to your ability to see real-time business data that comes from multiple departments or locations. The data you access gives you an overview of your company’s operations and provides insight into conditions, relationships, and trends that are not otherwise apparent.

To thrive in today’s global economy, small businesses must incorporate some of the advantages formerly available only to larger firms. The most important of these advantages is anytime-anywhere access to real-time business data.

As a result, data visibility enables fast and effective decision making, as shown in these two scenarios:

- **You receive a huge order.**

This is every small manufacturer’s dream. Viewed in isolation, the order is a cause for celebration; but viewed in context, it presents challenges. For example, it requires that you find the financing needed to purchase raw materials and that you notify your operations team to ramp up production.

- **You experience a spike in service calls or returns.**

This not-so-good scenario presents a different set of challenges. The spike may indicate a production problem, which requires that you notify the manufacturing team. If a recall is necessary, you must also notify distributors and confirm that your returns processes are in order.

Advantage of a Consistent Customer View

Many companies – yours may be one – have multiple records for a single customer. One record may reside in sales, another in accounting, perhaps a third in customer service. That means multiple sets of data must be reconciled to obtain a single, consistent view of each customer. But multiple sets of data can lead to errors or inconsistencies, which can degrade customer service. In addition, maintaining multiple systems is expensive.

With an integrated and accurate view of your customers and business processes, you can deploy your limited resources effectively to maximize profit potential and minimize inefficiencies.

RESPONSIVENESS

DOING THE RIGHT THING, RIGHT NOW

How can data visibility help you respond faster to customer demands and market changes? Here are two examples:

- **Clothing retailer with several stores**
Taking advantage of new technology that enables easy access to business process data, a manager sees that sales forecasts call for increased sweater sales in a particular store. The manager quickly increases shipments to that location, reducing the possibility that customers will arrive to find the sweater shelves empty.
- **Company that sells and installs computers and networking gear**
Leveraging new functionality that provides an overview of the company's business processes, a manager sees a spike in service requests for a particular product. The manager takes a positive and proactive approach to this data, jumps on it as an opportunity, and contacts other purchasers of that same product to offer services or replacements.

Agility Increasingly Important

The ability to respond quickly, even proactively, is becoming ever more critical as the pace of global business increases. In this respect, small businesses often have the advantage; they can be more agile than larger companies – if they have easy access to accurate business process information. Fast access to real-time data enhances your company's ability to see change coming, understand its implications, and take appropriate action.

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TECHNOLOGY

IMPLEMENTING THE RIGHT SOFTWARE

There are now software applications available that can help small businesses improve data visibility so they can respond quickly to changing conditions. These applications integrate what might currently be separate applications or databases. They provide accurate and timely data, readily accessible through a single, intuitive interface. Integration enables operational efficiencies such as smoother procurement and reduction of transcription and input errors.

These new software applications can even facilitate regulatory and contract compliance – an increasingly crucial issue for small businesses – by automatically tracking when required actions occur. Today business management applications are not just for large enterprises; they are becoming crucial for small companies that want to compete globally.

SAP Business One helps small companies make better strategic and tactical decisions faster by automating business processes and delivering an accurate, unified view of critical information across areas such as sales, finance, purchasing, warehouse management, and manufacturing.

One good example of this new software is the SAP® Business One application. Designed specifically for small businesses, SAP Business One enables companies like yours to automate business processes and deliver an accurate, unified view of critical, up-to-the-minute information across all functional business areas. With 360-degree visibility into areas such as sales, finance, purchasing, warehouse management, and manufacturing, your executives can make better strategic and tactical decisions faster. This kind of visibility also helps increase the company's responsiveness and profitability.

The SAP application includes a “drag and relate” feature that gives people at all levels of your company end-to-end visibility of business operations. This feature makes it easy for users to drill down into company data and analyze results.

With its embedded customer relationship management functionality, SAP Business One integrates sales-force automation, sales pipeline tracking, opportunity management, strategic selling, campaign management and prospecting, and contract management. Its breadth of functionality gives you seamless visibility into different departments.

With this visibility into the entire process – not just into one department – you gain a more accurate understanding of your customers and their needs. As a result, you can more easily discern where and how to make improvements in sales and service processes. The benefit: increased sales, improved efficiency, and greater profitability.

Small businesses that can respond quickly to changing conditions often have the advantage; they can be more agile than larger companies – if they have easy access to accurate business process information.

In addition, SAP Business One enables you to respond faster to changing conditions. Via a workflow feature, the application alerts or notifies appropriate employees when a preset threshold has passed, when you reach an anticipated number of sales, or when the number of parts available is getting low. The software automatically recommends a response to these events. It also triggers an alert when there is any breach of predefined business policy.

Finally, SAP Business One supports field service operations such as service contract management, service planning, tracking of customer interactions, customer support, and management of sales opportunities. Your business can create a template for a warranty contract covering products or services. That template can be customized to include start and end dates as well as specific contract terms such as guaranteed response or resolution times.

The application is ideally suited to companies with revenue up to US\$100 million or 250 employees. Supported by a worldwide network of qualified SAP business partners, SAP Business One has been deployed by more than 11,000 small businesses and midsize companies in many different industries.

For more information on how an integrated solution can provide the visibility and support your company needs to stay competitive, call your SAP representative today or visit us on the Web at www.sap.com/smallbusiness.

Integrated software not only enables operational efficiencies, but it can also facilitate regulatory and contract compliance – an increasingly crucial issue for small businesses – by automatically tracking when required actions occur.

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