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Global entrants good news

In today's highly demanding and competitive world, pressures on suppliers have never been greater. The drive to deliver high quality produce on time against increasingly tightening deadlines and at reduced prices is taxing the ingenuity of the most efficient suppliers. Furthermore, global competition is creating downward pressures on margins.

In such a trading environment, the role that can be played by Information Technology can mean the difference between success and failure. Furthermore, the move towards an integrated and seamless supply chain scenario is likely to test the capabilities of the current system suppliers. Many lack the necessary financial and technical resources to completely redevelop their solutions to take advantage of new technological advances.

As a result, companies have had to create supplementary systems to augment their core applications. The impact has been disparate islands of data that are difficult and expensive to manage while failing to provide vital up to date information on client and product trends. The current challenge facing senior executives is to integrate all of their business processes into a system that provides an agile solution that reflects the needs of their customers.

While industry consolidation is having a major impact on the many businesses, a similar trend is affecting the IT industry. Three years ago, there were over fifty credible suppliers in the global business management software arena. Today, less than twenty remain and industry analysts are predicting that the numbers will be soon in single figures. What this means for customers is the end of new functionality for certain product lines. The stakes are therefore very high for those customers affected as new business opportunities may be limited by the restrictions of their core business applications.

The move by major global software vendors such Microsoft into this market is good news for the industry. It provides companies with access to world class core business applications that can quickly be configured to meet both the needs of the industry and, more importantly, the specific requirements of the company. As



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a result, such companies can benefit from the massive research and development investments made possible by the financial strength of such organisations.

The new breed of business management solutions embrace all of the core business activities carried out within an organisation. They include finance, order processing, EDI, inventory management, customer relationship management, manufacturing, distribution and human resources. In addition, being already Web enabled makes them ideally suited to the holy grail of supply chain integration so desired by major customers.

Furthermore through Web services, they offer innovative mobile solutions designed to provide account managers, field workers and delivery personnel access to key business information. In the information age, the ability to centralise and virtualise core business processes can be a major differentiator in complete business situations.

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