

# MICROSOFT UNVEILS ITS NEXT GENERATION OF IT SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

Anglia Business Solutions outlines the next generation of software applications previewed at the recent Microsoft Worldwide Partner Conference that are set to have a significant impact on the global IT industry, as software options becoming a key driver in a company's overall success

**EVERY YEAR**, more than 7,000 partners and 3,000 Microsoft personnel get together to review the previous year's progress and look forward to plans for the next 12 months.

The event, called the Worldwide Partner Conference, is a major highlight of the IT calendar. This year's conference was held in Boston, in the US, and highlighted a number of important new product releases that will have a significant impact on the global IT industry and its user base in the near future.

The central theme of the conference was how software is now becoming a key enabler in driving business performance. Many

benefits from the investments required to keep their software current. They, therefore, voted with their wallets and stuck with the older versions.

The People Ready initiative reflects the substantial efforts made by Microsoft to understand what people want from their systems in future and how they wish to use them. Hardly surprisingly, the results confirmed that people's expectations and requirements varied depending on the business model being used and its role in the organisation.

For example, the sales-order person would want immediate access to all of the customer order, commercial and inventory

## 'To meet the needs of the many users of technology within an organisation required a massive rethink.'

examples were used where integrated solutions facilitated closer customer connections while driving real world business processes. In doing so, it highlighted the trend of standardising with fewer technologies.

The aim is to reduce costs and complexity while making a strategic move towards real-time solutions. This will be projected in the market as part of the People Ready campaign and will lead with the question, "Is your business people ready?"

So, what does this statement mean? Behind the scenes, this heralds a radical change by Microsoft from a product-oriented company to a solutions-driven organisation.

In the past, the conference theme habitually centred on the new facilities incorporated into new product lines, such as Microsoft Office, Windows Server and Exchange.

The message to the partners was to go back and encourage customers to upgrade to the latest products in order to take advantage of these wonderful new facilities. However, the reality was that many clients identified few major business

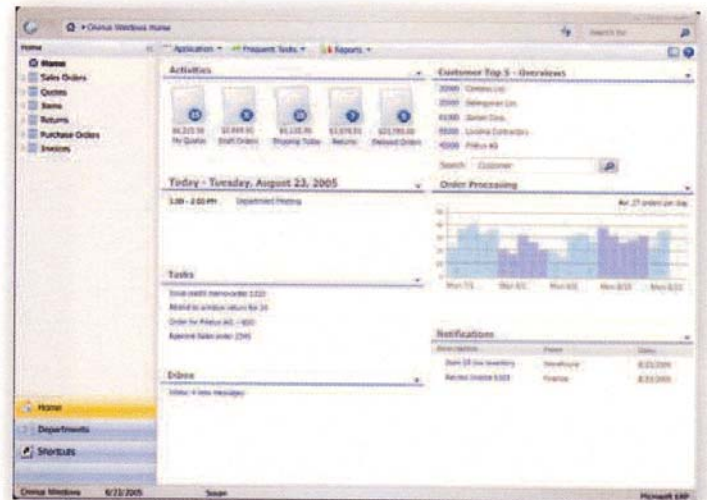
information that enabled them to do their job. Meanwhile, the CEO, on the other hand, would need a handle on all of the key performance indicators within the business as they happened.

To meet the needs of the many users of technology within an organisation required a massive rethink as to how the new solutions would be presented. The exercise uncovered the fact that in many organisations, there could be up to 55 roles covering 155 process areas.

This is hardly the "one size fits all" scenario so desired by many software vendors. Rather, these findings prompted a radical rethink regarding the design and development of the new applications. These were demonstrated in pre-release mode at the conference and generated considerable excitement among delegates.

The central theme was the creation of roles-based user interfaces. The principle was that upon logging onto their system, the user was presented with a single view of their working environment on the desktop as per their role within the business.

All of the supporting information



was no more than a mouse click away. For example, an orders-input person could immediately see all outstanding orders, have late deliveries and potential shortages flagged, alternatives identified and commercial issues highlighted.

The principle behind these developments is the seamless linking of both structured and unstructured data. The front end consists of easy-to-use web portal technology based on Microsoft's SharePoint Portal. Behind it, applications such as Microsoft Vista, the next version of Windows, and Office 2007 handle all of the unstructured applications.

The core business applications, such as Dynamics NAV take care of

In addition to this major software announcement, a number of other products were announced. They include a move by Microsoft Forefront client security provides malware protection for business desktops, laptops and server operating systems. The Small Business Server (SBS) has been substantially upgraded with the launch of SBS2.

Microsoft also indicated a substantial growth of business within the Dynamics business management sector. Dynamics NAV (formerly Navision) has now exceeded the 50,000 company user mark.

Major emphasis was placed on the

## 'The results confirmed people's expectations and requirements varied depending on the business model being used and its role in the organisation.'

the order processing, logistics and financial information. Mobile application information is delivered using the .NET framework and the key performance indicators are driven from SQL reporting services linked to the Dynamics NAV application. Overall, this approach demonstrated the integrated nature of all of the Microsoft applications.

need for solution centres to specialise in vertical applications. From the Microsoft team's research, the customer benefits in terms of rapid implementation and lower costs of ownership helped to substantially boost client satisfaction over large bespoke projects.

For further information email [mktg@angliabs.com](mailto:mktg@angliabs.com).