Baan & ERPLN User Group

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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our Members! Winter 2011

Chairman's Update

It's been a busy year for the User Group with two Conferences and a Consultancy Day during the course of the year. Our recent Winter Conference contained a well balanced agenda including network opportunities and also looked at some of the latest Infor developments. I am pleased to report that a full set of presentations from the Winter Conference is now available to download from our website. More details about our events and their content can be seen later in the newsletter.

As we reach the end of another year please look out for your membership renewal. Unfortunately after a few years of freezing membership fees it has been necessary to raise these slightly, however, the committee still believe that your membership fee still represents excellent value and we will be doing our best during the coming year to ensure that this continues to be the case. On this subject please look out for news of some exciting new benefits from Infor included with your renewal form and also detailed elsewhere in this newsletter.

It only remains for me to thank the rest of the committee for their efforts during the year and wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. See you all in 2012.

Neal Matthews, Chairman.

Planned Events for 2012

- **2nd February**
  Site visit to GKN, Isle of Wight
- **27-28 March**
  Spring Conference combined with Infor Customer Day, Farnborough
- **June**
  Infor Consultancy Day, Solihull
- **October/November**
  Winter Conference, Solihull

Site Visit to GKN, Isle of Wight

The visit has now been booked for **Thursday 2nd February** – put this date in your diaries!

The provisional agenda will include:

- Details of Go Live
- Implementation
- Lessons Learnt
- PLM
- Streamserve
- Site Tour

There will be a limit of 20 spaces available – the booking office will be opening after the Xmas break so book early to take advantage of this great opportunity!

Winter 2011 Conference

The Conference was held once again at the Sketchley Grange Hotel in Hinckley, Leicestershire and, unlike last year, we managed to avoid any snow!
Here are the summaries of some of the individual sessions written by various attendees.

Sketchley Grange Hotel

Budget Control – Learn the Functionality
Steve Leybourne, Infor Consultancy Services

Although originally developed for not-for-profit budget constrained organisations the "budget control" module, available in FP7 onwards, provides the ability to see an overview of anticipated, planned, and actual costs for

selected (or all) combinations of cost centre and ledger code (aka budget accounts), providing notifications, exception handling and approval to budget managers. It's downfall is no integration with the LN Finance package's Financial Budget System, so the budget variance report is unchanged and duplicate maintenance of budgets, solve that and it could be useful for many companies.

Introduction to Baan APIs
Andy Donn, ARC Gateway

Andy started his presentation by giving an overview of APIs, explaining where and why you would use them. He then covered the benefits of their use, explaining that there is no need for source code and that as the APIs were effectively running the session, business logic would not be subverted nor the database be corrupted - traditional hazards of other data interfaces. Patches and Service Packs can also generally be applied without any modification to existing APIs.

Andy then ran through a very basic example (Maintain Areas), showing how to create and then run an API (including an example of running an API from Visual Basic).

After a break Andy went into more depth and presented a "Before You Start" checklist, expressing the importance of understanding session logic and explaining how to deal with different data types within your API code. Useful resources including log files, various solutions from the Infor support web site and the baanboard.com forum were then explored.

Following this, Andy went "hands on" and showed the "Maintain Areas" session running in debug mode. He then moved onto a live Customer example which automatically syncronises Production Bills of Materials.

Andy finished his session by demonstrating an interface tool called ORP.

Infor 10 ERP Enterprise (LN) - Product Roadmap
Martin Wyatt, Infor

Once you get past the new name, the latest release of Baan 6 looks very good, up-to-date and full of rich features, improved usability and a modern interface. Martin gave a good level of detail on the future focus of development.

User Case Study - Fullwood
Bob Harland, Fullwood

We were given some background information into the company, which produces milking equipment which can be used to milk anything from the obvious cows, to the more unusual, camels (only usual/unusual from the UK perspective). Fullwood conduct their business mainly through Dealers and Distributors with exceptions in the South West where they deal directly with some Farmers. Fullwood also hold a Royal Warrant for works carried out at Windsor Great Park.

Fullwood had been using an older version of Baan (Triton) and decided in 2008/2009 to upgrade to ERPLN. They received a test system in April 2009 with a planned go-live 12 months later. This was extended slightly due to users not completely confident in moving forward by April 2010. The next available date was set and achieved in November 2010.

What would they do differently?

- The standard DEM roles were okay for training but did not suit individual needs. They should have developed roles more in keeping with the business and individuals.
- Key Users were vaguely defined, but did not have sufficient time on the project – more time was required to ensure all users were efficient in their processes.
- Gain a better understanding of the standard before implementing customisations. They installed a customisation which was later taken out.
- Need for a Post Go-Live Plan. With hindsight they realised they should have included some post go-live plan/meetings and refreshers with Key Users. This would have given them the opportunity to check progress and tackle any new issues rather than users going back to their daily routine. No opportunity to tweak and refine the system.

It is extremely helpful to hear other users views of implementations especially when they give an insight to what they could have done better, as this can be a lesson that we can all learn from if contemplating an upgrade, or for new users starting out on a new implementation.

Infor 10 – The Way Ahead for User Group Members

Phil Burgess, Infor

Phil explained how Infor was keen to see all Baan users upgrade to the latest software release (Infor 10 ERP Enterprise (LN)) and invited the assembled audience to proffer their companies' reasons for not upgrading.

Top of the list, quite understandably, was the perceived cost of upgrade much of which being user training. In addition, many companies are unaware of the new and enhanced functionality that may be available and how they might take advantage of this.

With these points in mind Phil announced that Infor will be holding discussions with the User Group during December with a view to enabling members to sandbox ERPLN with their own data which would be loaded by Infor. Exact details of this enticing offer are detailed later in this Newsletter.

Building Integrations using Event Driven Architecture ie: ION

Mike Tollan, Infor Consulting Manager

Mike explained that the purpose of his presentation was to try and explain some of the background architecture behind ION, and some of the jargon that would be used in the presentation, this included a definition of Event Driven Architecture, the concept of Publish and Subscribe and Business Object Documents (BODs). He continued by explaining more about BODs and defined verbs, nouns and components within the BODs. He then showed a Publishing Events and Subscription example of Creating and Approving a Purchase Order.

Mike then moved onto explaining the best way to Develop Integration using OAGIS BODs this included Identifying the Business Scenario, Identifying the Messages to be Exchanged, Accessing the data and making this happen by writing code for the API.

Infor's Approach of working to the Open Applications Group Integration Specification (OAGIS) and Infor's Design Goals were discussed before Mike ran through Infor's Solution Stack explaining the relevance of all the different components such as Pulse, Workflow, Event Management, Business Vault, Desk and Connect.

Mike then showed example flows for Creating Purchase Orders and Shipping Flows and defining connections and conditions from within ION Connect, Sales Order Cancellation and a Late Shipment alert from ION Event Management and Requisition Approval from ION Workflow. The presentation was concluded with a brief demonstration of how ION Pulse could be used to dynamically approve a Purchase Requisition.

As this highly technical presentation cannot really be given justice via a simple write up, please take the time to download it from the User Group website.

Allocation & Hard Pegging

James Rea, Infor Consultancy Services

James gave an informed seminar on Allocation & Hard Pegging within ERPLN FP7, and went through his presentation demonstrating via slides and LN how the allocation and hard pegging worked. This process is driven mainly by Sales Contracts set up with appropriate Terms & Conditions, with Service being an exception, where the set-up is an "all or nothing" based on a parameter change. Copies of the slides prepared and used by James can be found on the Baan ERPLN User Group website.

The demonstration indicated that James had a good knowledge of the topic and was able to answer many of the questions raised but one question reference serialisation, he was unable to answer during the discussion. However, he has since sent through his answer with appropriate screen-shots to the User group. His initial response to the question was honest, without waffle and his satisfactory response received very quickly.

Unfortunately we ran out of time before we could go too deeply into the complexities of the process. As this was only an overview some further training or testing would need to be carried out to fully appreciate any benefits or disadvantages. It did seem that some functionality had been customer specific driven, with the possibility that the functionality may not fit other LN users.

Final Assembly Control – An Overview

Mike Tollan, Infor Consultancy Services Manager

Mike, a self-confessed novice on the subject, sought to give an overview of the Final Assembly Control module now available in ERPLN.

This new tool is intended primarily for the automotive and aerospace markets but is applicable to any manufacturer operating assembly flow lines. The aim of the tool is to sequence and schedule assemblies flowing down the line or multiple lines and material delivery at each work station. The tool has great flexibility in that it can be used in both high and low volume modes, can handle assembly of many different variants and supports assemble to order, make to stock, configure to order and mixed mode manufacturing. In addition, because it is fully integrated with ERP and costing, it can report the actual cost by unit in low volume mode and the cost per line by time period in high volume mode which will give average actual cost per unit when divided by the quantity produced for the same time period. Beyond this I'm afraid your correspondent struggled to keep up - this is definitely a subject that could use more in-depth attention and a practical demonstration.

Easy-to-use Reporting and Dashboards for Baan & ERPLN

Phill Restall, Invensys Rail Ltd
Jim Maughan, Cyberscience

Phil Restall of Invensys Rail began the presentation by explaining how Cyberscience had been used during their ERPLN FP5 implementation initially as a tool for data migration before being used across the company for various transaction reports.

Jim Maughan of Cyberscience then began to explain more about the Enterprise Cyberquery (eCQ) tool, he stressed that ease of use, power, performance and cost were the main drivers for the tool. Jim then displayed a typical Cyberquery Launchpad for Baan applications, drilling down into the Launchpad showing various example reports including pictures, barcodes and logos. He then displayed various Financial Summary Reports and stressed how easy and quick it was to produce and run this type of report. Jim then briefly demonstrated the Excel Add In part of the tool as spreadsheet data was exported seamlessly to a report.

Jim then moved onto the dashboard side of the tool and demonstrated the various charting / graphical options, finishing his presentation by explaining the technical details behind a typical Baan implementation of the tool.

Nitin Sharma receiving his prize Kindle from Steven Oakes

Cyberscience sponsored a prize draw during the conference to win a Kindle, and the lucky winner was Nitin Sharma of Vector Aerospace, pictured here.

All the session presentations from the Winter Conference are available to download from our website – please note that you will need your User login and password.

Our thanks to Phil Burgess who kindly sponsored the evening's liquid refreshments and, as you can see, these were very well received by those attending the networking buffet!

Networking in the evening

Networking

One of the greatest benefits of being a member of a User Group is the fabulous networking with other users and at every event there is an opportunity during the refreshment breaks or throughout the evening.

Networking during the day

Committee contacts:
Neal Matthews –Beamlight Automotive Seating Ltd – 01773 538522
Chris Truin – Weston Aerospace – 01252 868116
David Sephton – Vector Aerospace International Ltd - 02392 946443

John McCormack – Promethean Ltd – 07976 900548
Eileen Brown – TDK Lambda UK – 01271 856664
Julie Clift-Thompson – Baan LN Users Admin Office – 01929 551267

more news ... news ... news ... news ...

From the feedback received from attendees, it appears that this is the time you are likely to pick up those 'golden nuggets' of information that help you in many ways once you return to your place of work.

During the Tuesday evening and Wednesday there was a mini Exhibition of product and service providers specifically for Baan and ERPLN users and this provided an excellent environment (together with the refreshments of course!) for everyone to network.

Exclusive Infor Benefits to Baan & ERPLN User Group Members for 2012

Following Phil Burgess' presentation at the Winter Conference and working with the feedback received from the audience and the committee in a subsequent meeting, Infor are offering the following benefits for 2012:

Infor Enterprise Application Review
FREE to user group members – Infor will provide to user group members free of charge a 1 – 2 day on site business process and application review, followed by management presentation and report back to the business. The Infor business consulting team will work with you to review process and the applications that support core business processes and identify areas of improvements, business risk, and to share knowledge of customers in similar industries.

Infor EPAK
Infor will provide a proof of concept free of charge for the solution. Infor will provide the software on a temporary license basis build a real example of your existing process and leave this with the business.

See the brochure of the solution and business benefits.

This offer is subject to agreement with Infor in relation to delivery services.

Infor ION
Infor will provide a 30 day software trial of this solution for the first ten users. Infor will provide the software on a temporary license basis for user group members.

See the brochure of the solution and business benefits. Infor consulting services will work with you to install, train on the ION solution.

This offer is subject to agreement with Infor in relation to delivery services and the customer agreeing to become a UK reference site.

Infor 10 Upgrade Bundle - "this time it's different"
Infor will launch in January a program that will enable user group customers to migrate from Baan to LN. This will be the lowest cost of upgrade ever launched in the UK and will be based around the latest migration and training tools, to ensure that not only are Infor resources kept to a minimum but the internal resources you need to upgrade are even lower. This is very often the largest barrier to change we hear from our customers.

For more details of any of the above offers, please contact Martyn Redman at Infor:
E-mail: Martyn.Redman@infor.com
Telephone: 07775 720078

Enhancements Process News

Infor have begun quarterly ER ranking. One closed at the end of October and the results are being published this month.

The next is scheduled for the end of January and will run for 6 weeks. That cycle continues approximately on a quarterly basis.

All clients have been informed that any of the ranked enhancements selected this year are actually considered for FP9, since FP8 is already locked.

For more details of the Voice to Infor process have a look at the Powerpoint shown during a recent hour call with customers and Infor. Voice to Infor details (Powerpoint).