Whitmann Price Consulting: Enterprise Systems

Josh and Sandra have been discussing e-commerce applications for the Whitmann Price Consulting (WPC) Advanced Mobile Communications and Information (AMCI) system. Because e-commerce involves all types of transaction processing systems, Josh and Sandra need to examine options for systems with which the new mobile device will interact.

Up until now, Josh and Sandra assumed that WPC software engineers would custom design the software used on their mobile devices. Recently, they began considering software packages for mobile devices created by companies such as SAP. SAP xApps composite applications for mobile business are ready-made applications designed to provide access to information and processes anytime, anywhere, and on a variety of mobile devices. The xApps include components for:

- Mobile Time and Travel, which provides mobile workers access to time sheet and travel management functionality

- Mobile Sales, which provides a solution for salespeople who need to perform their tasks quickly and productively

- Mobile Service, which enables field service engineers to react quickly to customer needs

- Mobile Asset Management, which allows in-house service engineers to access relevant business processes anywhere, anytime

Also offered with xApps are tools to support supply chain management, business intelligence, and other key business areas.

Certainly a suite of applications such as this would save development time, but Josh and Sandra need to consider how the application will interact with existing corporate systems. The transaction processing systems that consultants access through the mobile devices affect systems throughout WPC. Important transaction data will be collected, edited, corrected when necessary, manipulated on the handheld devices and stored in WPC databases. Once stored, the transaction data affects invoicing systems, customer relationship management (CRM) systems, scheduling systems, purchasing systems, accounting systems, and a variety of management information systems and decision support systems. Josh, Sandra, and all involved in the decision must evaluate the effects of the additional system on the entire information infrastructure of the organization. It may be that developing new interfaces and systems will add an undesirable amount of complexity to the infrastructure. Like many of today's organizations, WPC could find itself strained by the cost of managing and supporting dozens of disparate systems from a variety of vendors and a hodgepodge of custom systems. WPC might need to reorganize and standardize its systems around one vendor. Furthermore, an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system could be the solution. ERP systems from Oracle, Epicor Software, IFS, Microsoft Business Solutions (MBS), QAD, SAP, SSA Global, Intentia, and Lawson, to name a few, provide high-quality systems that incorporate the latest information systems technologies custom designed for a variety of industries.

Josh and Sandra plan to investigate whether WPC is using an ERP system. If they are, Josh and Sandra will look to the vendor of that system for mobile software. If not, and if Josh and Sandra agree that SAP xApps are ideal for the new mobile system they are designing, then they will examine other SAP systems such as CRM, ERP, and others. After Josh and Sandra review products from SAP, they will evaluate them with products from other vendors. They might find extra favor with their bosses if they present more than the AMCI system by showing the organization solutions to a wide variety of system issues through an integrated, one-vendor approach.