

Enabling Business Automation: Rightsizing ERP For Small Businesses

Spring 2009



Software Concepts provides uniquely comprehensive computing solutions to small and emerging businesses. With more than 18 years in financial accounting, inventory control, order management and advanced applications, the company installs and supports its own software for growing businesses who desire ERP features at down to earth prices. Software Concepts is an IBM Authorized Business Partner.

Enabling Business Automation: Rightsizing ERP For Small Businesses

SMALL BUSINESSES WORRIES

If you're like the typical small or mid-sized company, you're under enormous pressure these days to process orders or service customers faster, on a tighter budget, with near-zero tolerance for errors. You may worry about making sure inventory levels are just right, or ensuring that your customers' products or services are delivered at exactly the right time. You could use a better information technology (IT) system to help you plan, schedule and track your business transactions. But you may fear that a new software system may cause more problems than it will solve.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MADE EASY

In fact, the typical small and growing company is expected, increasingly, to behave like a big company when it comes to its IT capabilities. But growing firms, stretched to the maximum in time and money, don't have a big company's IT resources.

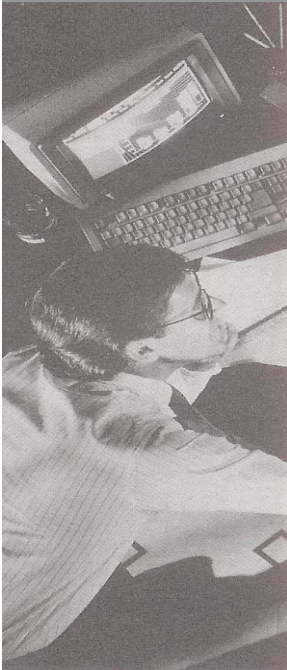
What growing companies like yours need is an out-of-the-box, turnkey "IT system that will be trouble-free, easy to use, and will efficiently automate all of your business processes-from quote to delivery. You'd also really appreciate a generous helping of old-fashioned IT service and support from your software supplier without a huge consulting bill attached. In other words, you need enterprise resource planning (ERP) software that is expressly designed for small and mid-sized companies. And you need it without the headaches, expenses, or long implementations that still make headlines.

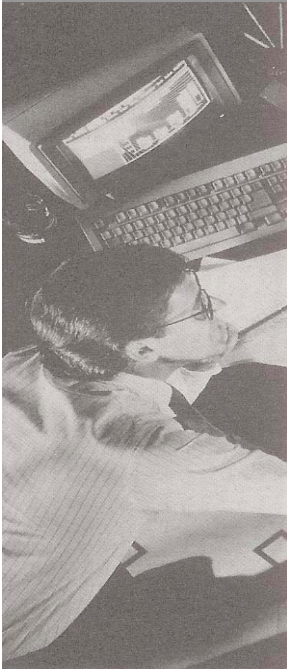
"The team here finds the software provided by Software Concepts to be very easy to use."

— Jack Costello, Executive Vice President, Crusader Paper

SMALL BUSINESS GROWS UP

ERP is often thought of as a big-company concept. But these days, small businesses need the capabilities that ERP provides just as much as large companies do. ERP gives you an integrated back-office system that can seamlessly manage and process business transactions from the initial quotation or customer contact to the delivery of the order, as well as financial analysis and reporting on sales data and performance. ERP means no more manual re-entry of data from one system to another and no more outdated records because someone forgot to update the database.





For companies struggling to implement electronic data exchange with their customers, a good ERP system can provide a simple B2B integration solution. But not all ERP systems are alike. In fact, they vary greatly in their ability to support key functions or customization options. As software vendors integrate more functionality into their applications, and the push to open standards gains momentum, the software choices for small businesses are getting more complicated. But the good news is that some vendors are offering more functionality, openness and reliability in their offerings. But what really matters to a small business?

SMALL BUSINESS NEEDS

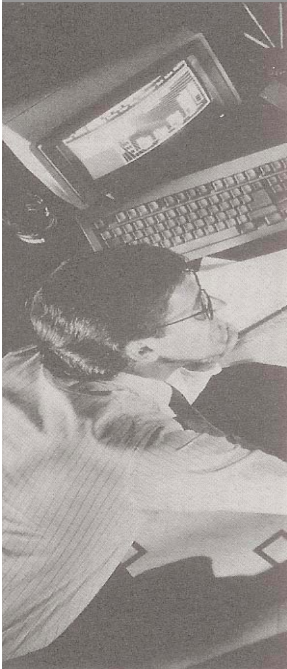
Small and growing companies need to address their critical operational needs when shopping for software solution. Many small companies get by with a "starter system" that is acceptable initially, but does not scale to allow business growth. When owners feel the growing pains and see their time budget shrink, frustration becomes a keen motivator for searching for an effective business automation solution. Today, top concerns regarding the assessment of software vendors usually include:

1. Functionality and features that enable the internal and external departments to work together in a truly integrated fashion -- and in real time.
2. Rock-solid performance in terms of execution time, availability and reliability.
3. Computer system security that is easy to implement and manage.
4. Unlimited amounts of service and support without breaking the bank.

Small business owners need a solution that can be altered quickly to suit the needs of their businesses. They don't want to wait months, and pay a big consulting bill, for the right to have software modified to fit into their business processes. Software Concepts provides a flexible and battle-tested application called DS90. The software solution offers ERP features previously found only in high-end ERP solutions. In short, DS90, customers enjoy:

" I like just picking up the phone, reaching a programmer, and implementing a solution quickly. And there's no way we would have gotten the ability to measure production on multiple bases or calculate commission for many schema over many product categories. "

*— Jack Costello, Executive Vice President, **Crusader Paper***



- ◆ **A Turnkey System.** We deliver a custom solution with software and hardware bundled into one easy-to-use platform that does everything you need: order management, inventory control, purchasing, sales analysis, accounts payable & receivable, general ledger, light manufacturing and commission management.
- ◆ **Easy Customization.** Our DS90 software is extremely flexible and easy to customize to meet your unique requirements. Everything is built into the software, so customization is just a matter of turning on, or off, the functionality. Moreover, anything we didn't include, we can. Updates are a phone call away.
- ◆ **Multiple Choice of Clients.** Software Concepts software is "client agnostic" and supports a range of client interfaces - Web browser, character based, Windows client or ActiveX - so you can use the client platform to suit your needs.
- ◆ **Multiple Choice of Operation Systems.** Software Concepts offers the IBM Power 520 Server as the central server. It is the only server in the industry that can consolidate and integrate a wide range of operating systems simultaneously including: i5/OS, Linux, Windows and AIX.
- ◆ **Simplified EDI.** We make electronic data interchange easy and we can integrate a variety of electronic data formats. Our customers tell us that their EDI initiatives eliminates laborious tasks, saves hundred of hours of labor and increases productivity while boosting the bottom line.

" We now process up to 1,500 orders weekly. This used to require five agents. We now perform this task with 1 ½ agents. We have also grown our business by 75% since implementing Software Concepts software without adding any administrative or office staff. "
— Mark Irving, Technology Director, **Sure Winner Foods**

MISSION-CRITICAL RELIABILITY FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Small business owners don't have time to deal with system crashes, reboots, reinstalls, or other common IT tragedies. They need a dependable system that will run quietly and efficiently, without "blue screens of death" or unexplained slowdowns. Software Concepts solutions provide:

- ◆ **Super-Fast Performance.** Clean, tight, well-documented code is optimized for performance and stability, and the proof is in the performance: sub-second response time for all users. No hard stops, no screen freezes or server crashes - as is too often the case with other solutions.

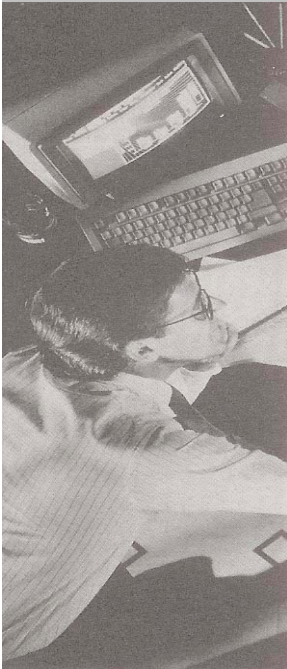
- ◆ **Efficient Workflow.** Our software features ergonomically designed screens and workflow to optimize productivity. Each field and each screen was carefully evaluated to determine the optimal positioning of fields and workflow. And each screen, every workflow, can be customized and optimized to fit in with your business processes - you don't have to fit in with our software. We also offer choices for user interfaces: one for those who like rapid, volume-oriented entry, and another for those who require a more graphical Windows approach.
- ◆ **Stability.** DS90 runs on IBM's Power 520 server, known as one of the most rock-solid platforms in the industry. IBM Power 520 users expect fewer unplanned downtime hours and fewer users affected by unplanned outages. Power 520 users are spending less idle time waiting for applications to come back online and more time executing their business.

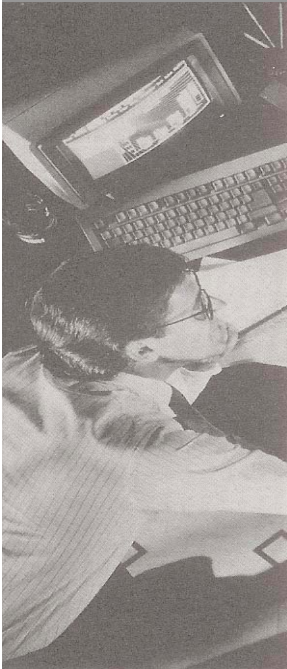
Security. The IBM Power 520 family of servers has a reputation for being a secure system and a highly virus-resistant platform and holds the distinguished C2 security rating, a certification from the National Security Agency. (The C2 rating applies at the operating system level 50 security setting.)

SUPPORT, SUPPORT, SUPPORT

Every small business owner needs to know that their software provider is available for support assistance. If there's a problem, you need help with it immediately—not in four hours or the next business day. With Software Concepts you're guaranteed to get...

- ◆ **Technical Support.** We're always available to take a customer call and resolve any issue right away. We provide support however it's needed: via phone, remote diagnostics, or on-site troubleshooting.
- ◆ **Experience and Domain Expertise.** Each and every member of our technical staff has more than 18 years of experience in developing and migrating software applications. The average tenure is more than 20 years of technology experience.





- ◆ **Deep Software Knowledge.** We wrote the software and we understand it inside and out. Our design exploits inherently efficient aspects of the IBM i operating system. This extreme extensibility translates to our ability to offer you the most efficient and economical modifications to software to meet your evolving business needs.
- ◆ **Step-by-Step Guidance.** We provide systems support through every phase of your IT project:

1. Initial Evaluation & Discovery. We carefully consult with you to document your existing business process and systems.
2. Installation. As IBM-certified technology consultants, we provide project management, systems configuration services for both hardware and software components.
3. Migration: We work with you to carefully plan the activation of your new system without any disruptions to your current operations.
4. System Controls. We ensure that your business stays on track with the assistance in applying the latest operating system PTF patches to ensure maximum system uptime.
5. Training. Whatever your needs or staff size, we provide informal or structured training services.

- ◆ **Source Code at No Extra Cost.** That's something just about no other software vendor will give you. But at Software Concepts, the code is loaded onto every system we sell. So it's your choice if you want to modify the source code yourself, with your programmers, or ask us to do it for you. We'll do whatever is most convenient for you. (Source code is provided on our Enterprise and ValuPak editions. May not be available on future editions. Source code is NOT available for our security management objects that controls the licensing and use of DS90.)

In summary, it is possible for small businesses to obtain the benefits of "new world" enterprise software technology. Some technology vendors like Software Concepts are uniquely positioned to deliver software applications and systems that offer truly integrated ERP functionality across back office functions, while offering the performance, security and reliability usually synonymous with very large businesses.

" Other software companies will not give you the code, because they want to control the relationship with the customer. But we want customers to do business with Software Concepts because they want to, not because they have to. So we give them the keys to the kingdom - the source code -- and the freedom to choose. "

*— Stephen Cataldo, CEO,
Software Concepts, Inc.*