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Enterprise System Advantages

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The Executive Information Systems (EIS) of corporate America are evolving from one of stove piped solutions and file based application to an environment of integrated systems operating on a common framework and database architecture. The catalyst to this change is the need for a more reliable computing environment and a desire to eliminate the non-value added cost of maintaining data redundantly across a myriad of tools.

The financial systems in place in many Fortune 500 companies are comprised of disjointed applications augmented with custom spreadsheets. In many of these firms, it is common to find the following processes:

- Create charge numbers in the financial system
- Export charge numbers from the financial system into the job cost system
- Validate the transfer
- Map the charge number to a task or WBS structure in the project management or earned value system
- Input budgets in the planning system
- Extract into Excel
- Validate and format for presentation
- Export planning to the tracking system
- Collect actuals in the financial system
- Extract and update in job cost
- Validate transfer and mapping
- Extract to Excel for analysis and presentation

This list is long and results in numerous disjointed copies of the data in many formats and levels of detail. The result is an endless cycle of validations and confusion as to the accuracy and source of information. In many cases, these systems are file bases and subject to the organizational skills of application users to manage the multiple copies or backups of data. The end results are inconsistent presentations of information, lost time to lost data, and poor decisions resulting from bad information.

Even in an environment where the implementation of the system is organized and disciplined, time and money are lost to reliability of file based (i.e. b-trieve, ISAM, or flat files) systems. These data storage mechanisms do not adequately support the volume of data required by an enterprise and are easily corrupted when an application fails, a user is disconnected from the network or system crashes. In many instances the data is not recoverable and must be re-input.

Contemporary systems like Dekker TRAKKER® that utilize an enterprise (industrial strength) database promote the organization of critical data and are not subject to the frailties of file based applications. Utilizing Microsoft SQL Server® or Oracle® database enables organizations to ensure the information is organized. Inherently, enterprise database engines are fault tolerant and are not subject to data corruption common to file-based applications. These systems also provide a standardized environment where data from one application can be integrated with data from other tools to form a warehouse. The advantage of creating integrations rather than interfaces between systems is the elimination of data redundancy promoting the reliability and integrity of

the information. Since the data do not move between systems, the need to validate the transfer is eliminated.

Enterprise architecture also eliminates the geographical challenges faced by many organizations. Accessing data from a file-based system across a Wide Area Network (WAN) through a file share is slow, requires significant maintenance and does not offer the level of security required for financial data. Enterprise systems protect the data within the owning application and from access by external tools (spreadsheets and desktop databases). Since the business rules of the application are elements of the database these rules are not short circuited by other applications. In addition, the access rights granted to a user within the application also apply when accessing data through external tools.

The advantages and cost savings to the organization of implementing enterprise applications are significant. The reliability and integrity of the data eliminate countless hours of time spent reconstructing lost data, validating the transfer of information and managing changes between interfaced systems. As an enterprise system, Dekker TRAKKER® integrates the organization and promotes the quality of information utilized in the decision support processes.

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