

## Sustainable ERP: SmartDog Helps Customers Maximize ERP Business Value

by Alison Weiss, June 2011

Every company wants to achieve maximum business value from their enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. After all, the main objectives of buying comprehensive ERP systems are to consolidate applications and bring more control to cross-functional processes. Too often, once companies implement ERP, they get comfortable with the system and stop exploring all that can be accomplished with such powerful applications. Sometimes it can be as simple as firms lacking the dedicated staff or the time to leverage all the features and functions across an ERP system. As a result, some enterprises don't even realize what they own and unnecessarily implement costly third-party tools. SmartDog Services is on a change mission. The Oracle Platinum Partner, which focuses solely on Oracle E-Business Suite (EBS), has a goal to improve ERP system sustainability with its new SmartDog Packaged Solutions Catalog of fixed-price, fixed-scope implementations of essential EBS functionality to help customers take complete advantage of the EBS software they already own.

According to Scott Elequin, president and CEO at SmartDog, typically when a company performs an ERP implementation, there's a first phase where the main required functions go in. Elequin says, "Then, there's a whole laundry list of features that are supposed to follow, but a lot of times people never get to these additional capabilities and more advanced features. Sometimes companies choose not to go as far as the software can take it because of cultural changes or contractual obligations."

In fact, a 2009 survey by Accenture reveals that most organizations use only 64 percent of their enterprise system's core functions. This can be very costly for companies. According to book author Marianne Bradford (Modern ERP), PhD, up to 70 percent of companies' total ERP costs relate to service and maintenance, but a large number are not maximizing the value of maintenance and services, neglecting to implement system enhancements and new features. And while the economic outlook in 2011 is improving, analysis of ERP spending by Panorama Consulting Group reveals that a majority of companies surveyed are still very cost-conscious, with constrained IT budgets that are driving prudent ERP software implementation projects.

SmartDog currently has more than 170 Oracle EBS customers, and they have found that many clients don't have the dedicated personnel within their organizations to fully focus on all the enhancements Oracle provides across all EBS modules. Elequin says, "Once a company implements its core ERP system, they don't systematically go and turn on new enhancements. Either they don't know about them or business users don't know to request them."

The Packaged Solutions Catalog features approximately 100 solutions that SmartDog has created and tested over time, working with customers across all types of industries. The catalog, which was launched in April 2011, is searchable by line of business, including customer relationship management, financials, HR, operations, and technology. The solutions allow customers to make use of software they already own and achieve quick business value by streamlining processing, speeding up payments, and eliminating redundant third-party software. The solutions also integrate easily with entities like FedEx, PayPal, and Bank of America.

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Melanie Keough, IT project manager at Stream Energy, was instrumental in getting her company to come aboard as a SmartDog customer in January 2011. She says, "I've worked with E-Business Suite Financials for about eight years. What SmartDog has done with the catalog is genius, in my opinion. It's given them the ability to easily communicate the value of a solution to a customer. And it's beneficial because it largely serves business users, not just IT users."

Recently, one of Keough's business users requested an easy way to export Oracle E-Business Suite text reports to Excel, a situation that was requiring the user to make excessive manual modifications. Keough says, "We looked in the SmartDog catalog, and there was a solution for business intelligence publisher documents to easily take reports and convert them into Excel or PDF. It had a set price, so I could tell her exactly what it would cost." Stream Energy's accounting department is likely to move forward in purchasing the SmartDog solution, and the best part for Keough is that the whole process was easy. No one had to do research or spend time explaining to the IT department what was needed.

Another plus for customers is that the solutions can be implemented in a matter of weeks instead of months because once a customer selects a solution and purchases it, SmartDog will remotely connect to the customer's Oracle environment from SmartDog's Solution Center to implement it. Because SmartDog is SAS 70-certified, security issues are addressed before any solution is implemented. Timm Elrod, chief operating officer at Skinceuticals, a Dallas-based cosmetics company, appreciates the fast, expert service SmartDog has provided for helping to support his company's Oracle-based e-commerce system. He says, "We've been a customer for eight years. What's really smart about the new catalog is that pricing is already set up, so customers can select a solution, hold a meeting, and make a decision, making the turnaround and implementation time quick."

Elrod also applauds the strong security provided by SmartDog. He says, "We're owned by L'Oreal, which has extreme security measures in place. SmartDog easily passed all the security audits required for meeting the strict global standards."

And when it comes to making better use of existing ERP software resources and generating better business value, Elrod believes SmartDog is on the right track. He says, "What I really appreciate is that, thanks to SmartDog's expertise and service, I can maintain the Oracle E-Business Suite applications I have until I'm ready to upgrade."