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Published by Wellesley Information Services



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SAP Insider (ISSN# 1537-145X) is published quarterly by Wellesley Information Services, a division of UCG Technology, LLC at 990 Washington Street, Suite 308, Dedham, MA 02026. A subscription to *SAP Insider* is free to qualified readers within the US and Canada. Outside North America, a fee of US\$39 is applied for international shipping and handling for an annual subscription. To subscribe, visit www.SAPinsideronline.com.

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This article appeared in the Jan • Feb • Mar 2008 issue of *SAP Insider* and appears here with permission from the publisher, Wellesley Information Services (WIS), www.WISpubs.com.



A lot of lip service is paid to the changing role of finance. But what does this mean in real-life terms? What are customers trying to do? How are they reworking financial processes and systems to address change? What initiatives or strategies are paying off?

The goal of this *SAP Insider* issue is to provide you with a practical guide of what works, what doesn't, and how SAP systems and technology can fix challenges you face in finance today.

From my conversations with customers, I've learned that, in many cases, older systems prevent them from addressing new and emerging demands in finance. They're forced to manage many processes manually, driving up the cost of finance and undermining the quality and performance of processes linked to finance.

Worse yet, some companies have attempted to address their initial system shortcomings by layering on a complex patchwork of specialty systems, each designed to do one job – not to address true, end-to-end business processes. This often results in an inability to scale business operations quickly, to deliver transparent financial reporting, or to provide relevant management insight that drives effective decisions.

It's ironic, but investing in specialized, non-integrated, financial management solutions can prevent you from elevating finance to become a true strategic partner of the business.

At SAP, we submit that finance transforms its value once it streamlines its own operations and establishes a platform where teams *outside* of finance begin to leverage the information and processes *within* finance.

This transformation is often characterized by simple process-improvement steps that deliver high value. The ability to streamline the collections process and accelerate customer payments to lower days sales outstanding (DSO) metrics is one example. Reducing the amount of manual labor and administrative costs associated with period-end closing cycles is another.

For others, finance transforms once it operates as a strategic partner to the business, serving as a source of knowledge and insight that helps operating units improve performance and profitability.

The path to transform finance is uniquely yours. Success depends on knowing when to start and whom to choose as your long-term partner.

SAP supports the widest range of finance organizations in the world – from single-unit entities that operate in one country to sophisticated global corporations that need support for highly networked business processes. The strength of our core finance applications has earned us our leadership position in the market, and our platform allows us to extend financial management capabilities to serve new needs and business requirements for CFOs.

We honor the trust you've placed in SAP, and we look forward to working with you to define new processes that set the bar for best-run finance in your industry.

Philip Say

Vice President, Solution Marketing, SAP ERP
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