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# How to Increase the E.R.P. (Effectiveness, Responsiveness, and Productivity) of Your Business Users

Get Powerful Enterprise Information into Business Users' Hands with Alloy Software by IBM and SAP



**Michael Reh** ([michael.reh@sap.com](mailto:michael.reh@sap.com)) is the Senior Vice President and General Manager of the Information Worker PTU at SAP AG. With more than 20 years of experience in the software industry, Michael currently manages a development organization driving solutions for business users to interact with enterprise applications in their familiar environments.

Alloy — a jointly developed product from IBM and SAP — gives you access to SAP applications and information through Lotus Notes.

Enterprise software users are typically divided into two groups. On one hand, you have **task users** who perform repetitive, well-defined tasks within enterprise solutions. HR administrators, purchasing agents, and customer service representatives are example task workers, or “power users.” For instance, these users would leverage enterprise software user interfaces (UIs) to create new employee records, change payroll data, or update customer information. These standard enterprise software UIs are optimized to serve task users' needs; the interfaces are highly flexible, support a wide variety of complex transactions, and have been designed to support a high volume of transactions.

On the other hand, you have **business users** who spend their time dealing with a wide variety of work tasks and projects. In a typical organization, business users represent over half of the total employees. Business users are the sales managers, financial analysts, marketing professionals, and many others in decision-making or management roles within a company. The activities they perform are often related to creating something new (a strategy, some analysis), solving problems (a product recall, a customer service issue), managing events (a budget transfer approval, a pricing approval), or collaborating (creating a sales proposal, conceptualizing a new product). To address these activities, business users need corporate information, such as sales data or financial records, to make correct and informed business decisions. And to implement these decisions, users must initiate and adhere to business processes. As a result, business users need to access the enterprise systems that run their organization.

But let's face it. These business users do not have the time — or the inclination — to become fully proficient in your enterprise applications. And training them to do so is neither cost-effective nor practical.

Business users spend most of their time in personal productivity and communication applications like Lotus Notes, and they want access to the people, processes, and information they need to do their job in one user interface — the one in which they spend most of their time.

Through their exposure to a new generation of consumer Web sites — think of iGoogle, My Yahoo, Flickr, or Facebook — business users have high expectations for access and usability when it comes to enterprise applications. They want software solutions that are easy to use, that perform tasks quickly, and that reduce redundancy and errors.

So how do you get these business users to engage with the enterprise processes, data, and applications they need?

You bring enterprise software to them. You embed enterprise processes, data, and applications directly within their email inbox, calendar, contact list, or instant messaging functionality — the tools they already use and rely on daily. Organizations that run both SAP software and IBM Lotus Notes can now achieve these objectives with Alloy software by IBM and SAP.

## Alloy: Minimum system requirements

- Lotus Notes 8.02 or later
- SAP ERP 6.0 or later

## SAP as Easy as Opening an Email

Imagine that you are a sales manager and you get an email from one of your direct reports (Elliott Samson) requesting approval to attend an upcoming training session in Orlando. Before you can decide whether Elliott can go, you need some important information. You need to know how much travel and training budget you have left. So you consult a

spreadsheet or try to remember how to log in to your financials system to find the information.

You also need to know who else on your team might be out of the office during that week, so you can be sure you have enough coverage. So you call HR for the vacation schedule or search for the scrap paper where you jotted down your employees' requests for time off.

It's a very manual process, and you waste precious time toggling between emails, applications, and spreadsheets to find the answers you need. You lose momentum, and the information you do find is often disconnected from real-time enterprise data. You end up making a decision that's based less on fact, and more on gut feel.

Now imagine that within Elliott Samson's original trip request email, you see a simple pie chart that shows how much of your travel and training budget is already accounted for, and how much you have available to spend (see **Figure 1**). You see a link to a report that shows who else is on leave at the same time. You see a link to corporate travel policies that have recently changed.

With the simple click of a button, you can approve or deny Elliott's request. And without ever leaving your familiar Lotus Notes desktop environment, your actions are transparently tied in with applicable SAP workflows and reports.

## Alloy: Key Features

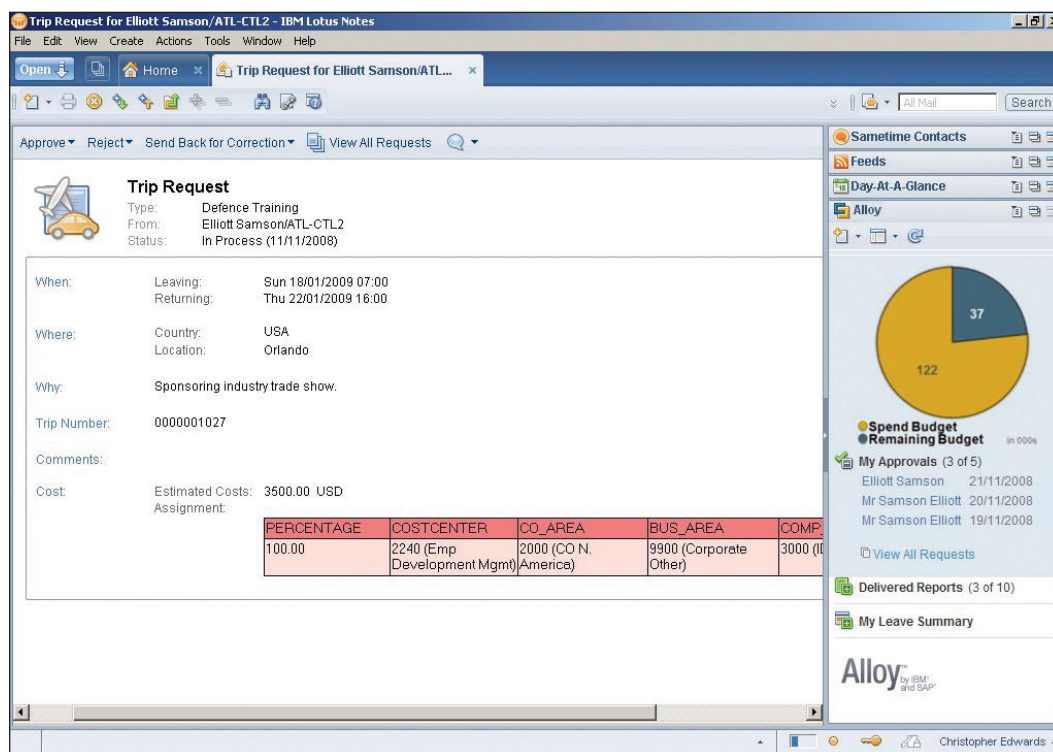
To better understand how it all works, let's tour through some of Alloy's most exciting features and functionality.

- **Reports management** – With Alloy, business users can personalize, schedule, and access reports from SAP Business Suite applications via Lotus Notes while maintaining data security. They can also share reports with co-workers without violating security restrictions, and they can view reports both online and offline.
- **Leave management** – Business users can approve and submit leave requests from within their familiar Lotus Notes environment. They can also view contextual information to make approval decisions, and they can set up leave requests so that they're processed according to approval guidelines in SAP ERP.
- **Travel management** – Business users can approve and submit travel requests from within Lotus Notes. And they can view contextual information to ensure cost-effective travel that fully complies with corporate policies supported by SAP ERP.
- **Workflow decision management** – Alloy software allows an organization to incorporate decision steps related to the workflow of any SAP business process, such as a hiring approval that is required

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Alloy software allows an organization to incorporate decision steps related to the workflow of an SAP business process into Lotus Notes.

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**FIGURE 1** Alloy enables managers to review and approve or deny trip requests within Lotus Notes

## Top 10 Benefits of Alloy

- 1. Provides up-to-the-minute information for key decision makers:** Alloy promotes faster and better decision making through intuitive access to relevant, contextual business information across the enterprise.
- 2. Boosts business user efficiency and productivity:** Instead of switching among applications and environments, users can perform key functions – like managing reports, approving requests, and creating custom functions – all from within the Lotus Notes environment.
- 3. Offers a familiar working environment:** Alloy facilitates access to key enterprise processes and information through the Lotus Notes environment, both online and offline.
- 4. Requires minimal training:** Since users already work in Lotus Notes, Alloy is intuitive to them and thus training is minimized, helping to speed user adoption.
- 5. Can be deployed rapidly:** Alloy can be rapidly deployed without extensive customization to support key business processes.
- 6. Is extensible:** You can easily extend Alloy to integrate decision steps related to business processes within SAP software into Lotus Notes.
- 7. Is customizable:** The software provides an environment that allows in-house developers and system integrators to customize and extend its functionality to provide contextual information for better decision making.
- 8. Promotes collaboration:** Instant messaging functionality supports your collaborative approach to decision making by facilitating contact with others without disrupting structured business processes.
- 9. Increases the value of existing investments in both IBM Lotus Notes and SAP solutions:** Alloy fully leverages existing investments in SAP applications and Lotus Notes, cutting down on the need to build and maintain expensive custom programming or interfaces, thus increasing ROI.
- 10. Improves compliance:** By providing controlled access to up-to-date information for business users, you gain more support for compliance efforts and corporate decisions. You also gain better risk management and mitigation, as users can more easily adhere to business processes, follow workflows, and act on essential information.

as part of the recruitment process, into a Lotus Notes-based notification.

Alloy is also customizable, enabling organizations to bring contextual information from SAP applications into the Lotus Notes sidebar. This comes in handy when business users need to make process decisions that require such information to improve their decision making (see sidebar above).

Let's look back at our example with Elliott Samson; to approve his travel request, you as the manager need to know how much money is left in your travel budget and what your company's current travel policy is. To appropriately embed this company-specific information, developers can customize Alloy using

standard tools like Lotus Domino Designer, Lotus Script, and the ABAP Workbench. Additionally, this contextual information can be displayed in the sidebar as any HTML element – a graph, table, text, or link. Alloy also takes advantage of the offline and collaborative capabilities inherent in Lotus Notes and Domino.

### Conclusion

Alloy software is the first product to be jointly developed and supported by SAP and IBM. SAP and IBM have been partners for over 30 years and, with Alloy, both companies have added a new level to their long and proven strategic partnership.

Alloy is both an application and a platform. And since it includes not only out-of-the-box functionality but also customization tools, Alloy can be extended to meet the unique needs of any organization.

Alloy's beta customers are already taking advantage of the software's extensibility, linking business-critical processes to Lotus Notes and anticipating a major impact on the effectiveness, responsiveness, and productivity of their business users.

To learn more about Alloy software, call your SAP representative today or visit [www.sap.com/alloy](http://www.sap.com/alloy) or [www.ibm.com/software/lotus/alloy](http://www.ibm.com/software/lotus/alloy). ■

## Additional Resources...

...from **SAP** Insider

- ✦ "IBM and SAP Deliver SAP Applications Through Lotus Notes" by Davin Wilfrid (*ERP Expert*, Volume 2, Update 2, [www.erpexpertonline.com](http://www.erpexpertonline.com))
- ✦ "The 'Atlantic' Crossing: SAP & IBM Join Forces to Create a Rich Collaboration Environment" by Evan J. Albright (*SAP NetWeaver Magazine*, Summer 2008, [www.NetWeaverMagazine.com](http://www.NetWeaverMagazine.com))