

Software Upgrades Automate Service Company Processes

RENEE BOUCHER FERGUSON
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Professional service organizations are getting new collaboration and integration capabilities from professional services automation vendors Automation Centre and CascadeWorks Inc.

Automation Centre, of Tucson, Ariz., will announce TrackerOffice 2.1 next week at Microsoft Corp.'s Exchange & Collaborative Solutions 2001 conference in Orlando, Fla. Also next week, San Francisco-based CascadeWorks will announce the third generation of its services e-procurement software suite.

CascadeWorks Clarity 3.0 combines three new features – SpendManagement, Business Relationship Management and Enterprise Integration Layer – that allow service organizations to configure their process and system integration requirements.

Clarity 3.0's SpendManagement feature provides a financial management functionality that tracks, reconciles and optimizes dollars spent on services. The Business Relationship Management feature is a flexible application infrastructure that configures to support multiple business processes across an organization, while the Enterprise Integration Layer is an integration interface that leverages industry standards to link CascadeWorks with core enterprise applications.

What both Tracker Suite and TrackerOffice 2.1 do, essentially, is enable increased collaboration between departments - IT and accounting, for example - by linking back-end applications from those departments.

Automation Centre's technology, on the other hand, rides alongside both Lotus Development Corp.'s Notes/Domino and Microsoft's Outlook/Exchange platforms to provide e-mail-style collaboration.

Automation Centre's original collaboration application, Tracker Suite, is the Lotus Notes application, while TrackerOffice 2.1 works



with Microsoft's e-mail infrastructure.

What both Tracker Suite and TrackerOffice 2.1 do, essentially, is enable increased collaboration between departments – IT and accounting, for example – by linking back-end applications from those departments. By riding alongside either the Lotus or Microsoft platform, the user interface is equivalent to an e-mail interface.

TrackerOffice 2.1 streamlines project management by enabling users to collaborate over a company's existing Outlook or Exchange platform, enhancing the efficiency of invoicing, resource management and timesheets, according to company officials. TrackerOffice 2.1 is focused for professional service firms with specific functionality, including the ability to generate invoices, create and track adjustments, and view invoice histories, officials said.

For automated time and expense reporting, users can generate electronic documents and recognize electronic signatures for time card distribution. The system supports billable, non-billable and fixed-price billing formats.

For resource management, TrackerOffice 2.1 tracks allocation and schedules by person, position, project or cost center. Likewise, Version 2.1 automatically imports and exports resource availability to Microsoft Project, creates Microsoft Outlook tasks, and exports task status and resource usage to Microsoft Project. ♦

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Automation Centre
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www.acentre.com 435 E. 9th Street Tucson, AZ 85705 Phone: 520.882.9287 Fax: 520.623.8721