

SAP offers BI capabilities for Business One users

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SAP is looking to help Windows shops running its ERP applications get business intelligence on the cheap.

To that end, the German applications vendor announced Tuesday that it plans to add technology acquired from a business intelligence software company to its SAP Business One line of materials requirement planning and ERP applications.

Business One serves the small to medium segments of the market, and with the rollout of a new XL Reporter tool, SAP wants to help users in smaller companies run reports and perform analysis without expert help. In addition, XL Reporter will interoperate with Microsoft's Excel and Outlook programs -- so users familiar with the Microsoft desktop look and feel will be able to export SAP data directly to their desktops for slicing and dicing.

SAP is adding the features following the acquisition of iLytix Systems. The terms of that transaction weren't released.

XL Reporter should cut down on the time and errors associated with manually extracting data and reformatting it for use in a report, said Gadi Shamia, vice president of solution management for SAP Business One. Although he expects XL Reporter to be primarily used by chief financial officers or controllers doing budget analysis, or sales managers collecting and studying lead information, the tool can work with any piece of Business One data. Companies can also use it to improve inventory and logistics or manufacturing operations.

XL Reporter could simplify the creation of multiple reports, said Joshua Gold, Co-CEO of Laservall North America. The company provides laser-marking equipment and runs Business One to support its CRM, financial and inventory processes. Currently, Laservall must rely on the canned reports provided by SAP, which are difficult to reformat.

Gold also said that customizing different reports for various end users would require expensive training -- something the company doesn't want to spend money on after its considerable investment in its initial ERP rollout. While he hasn't used it yet, Gold said he's looking forward to the tool's availability.

XL Reporter will ship by the end of this quarter and will be added as part of the standard Business One upgrade at no extra charge.