

EnableSoft White Paper

Breaking the Efficiency Barrier:
**Understanding Data
Automation**



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Operations executives face a serious challenge: In a climate of increased economic constraints and limited IT resources, how can you achieve business objectives affordably and efficiently?

If you're like many of today's operations executives, you have a dilemma: The economy is uncertain, but regulatory pressure is mounting. IT resources are limited, but the competition is increasing. You must contain costs, but still grow revenue. All the while, your customers are demanding better, faster service. And it's all happening at a pace that too often exceeds the ability of IT departments or technology vendors to develop workable solutions.

According to an article in the St. Louis Business Journal, regulatory costs alone are having a staggeringly negative impact on the bottom line of American businesses—and many of those costs are direct overhead expenses that cannot be easily passed on to customers. SLBJ Reporter Greg Edwards interviewed the CEO of a \$1.5 billion-asset bank that has been forced to hire eight new compliance specialists in the last three years just to keep pace with increasing regulatory requirements.

When asked to estimate the total added cost of compliance, the CEO declined to give an answer. "I'd be afraid to," he said. But most business leaders—considering the potential impact of fines, litigation, bad publicity, and loss of customer confidence—believe the price of non-compliance could be even more devastating. So once again the pressure falls on operations executives to further reduce operating costs.

Regardless of the industry or market you serve, and regardless of the challenges your business faces, your ability to enter and maintain data, effectively and efficiently, is a primary factor in modern business success. Consider your customer and account records, fee schedules, rate tables, regulations, product and service codes, personnel files, and so much more: If you can't enter, maintain, integrate, and mine business data with speed, efficiency, and accuracy—and do it at a moment's notice—your business cannot compete.

Despite the real world of limited resources and cost constraints, you must still achieve business objectives and provide responsive customer service. After all, mergers, acquisitions, new products and services, updated rates and fees, revised regulations, new promotions, and competitive pressures will continue as your business works to grow.

Unfortunately, many operations executives find themselves resorting to expedient rather than efficient solutions to data maintenance challenges. Not wanting to miss out on a potentially profitable business opportunity—but lacking the technology to affordably automate business processes—they resort to inefficient manual processes that are often carried out by temps and part-timers using multiple spreadsheets. And all of those spreadsheets are a big part of the problem.

Recent studies have verified the distressing extent to which today's operations executives rely on hundreds—even thousands—of unstructured manual processes, or undocumented spreadsheets and databases to track business processes. These ad hoc data-management tools are created by well-meaning subject-matter experts (SMEs) who are simply trying to get the job done.

However, they end up trapping vital business logic in a “spreadsheet jungle” of labor-intensive and non-integrated workflows that cannot be audited. While the price of labor-intensive and error-prone projects is distressingly high in terms of human capital, those costs can be measured and accounted for.

But other costs are impossible to gauge, such as the potential security risk of entrusting sensitive business data to temporary workers or the impact of inaccurate data on customer service. And how can you measure the inefficiency, lost opportunity, and potential exposure that result from locking away key business processes in a host of disparate and undocumented personal spreadsheets and databases?

When the “truth” of your business processes is locked away in SME-created spreadsheets, you'd better not lose any of your SMEs. The bottom line? The last thing a modern operations executive needs is for vital business logic and mission-critical business data to be trapped in a spreadsheet.

Today's economic, competitive, and regulatory climate demands nimble and efficient responses from operations executives, which calls for high-quality data entry and data maintenance—as well as comprehensive data integration with in-house and external systems and applications.

But with all of the constraints that are being placed on operations departments, how can you respond to business needs quickly, efficiently, effectively, and affordably—without having to resort to ad hoc spreadsheets, expensive third-party developers, or labor-intensive manual processes?

Data Automation Software Changes Everything

The first personal computer to be featured on the cover of Popular Electronics—the MITS Altair 8800 in January 1975—was a hobbyist's dream: You built it yourself from a kit, and programmed it by repeatedly flipping mechanical switches. Even after Microsoft developed the first BASIC language compiler for personal computers, the PC was considered nothing more than a high-tech novelty— that is, until VisiCalc, the first spreadsheet program, was introduced in 1979.

VisiCalc seamlessly transformed a metal box of circuit boards, memory chips, and disk drives into a powerful business tool. With VisiCalc, an informed businessperson could analyze, recombine, and repurpose business data with unheard-of speed, accuracy, and efficiency. For the first time, a trained SME could understand and control mission-critical financial data and business plans. It's that data capability that launched the era of personal computing.

Yet with all of today's highly advanced automation capabilities, many operations executives still find themselves relying on labor- and spreadsheet-intensive data entry and data maintenance projects to accomplish important business objectives.

What if there was an alternative? What if today's operations executives had an affordable and accessible application they could use to automate the movement of data between disparate platforms and applications?

Such an application would enable a SME to seamlessly enter, maintain, migrate, integrate, mine, and test data from spreadsheets, PC-based software packages, and mainframe or Internet-based core business applications.

And because this new technology would access data through the presentation layer of the organization's existing systems and applications, data security and integrity would be preserved by the organization's pre-existing safeguards, business rules, and access filters.

An easy-to-understand, drag-and-drop user interface of this tool would empower operations specialists and SMEs by enabling them to create fully automated, step-by-step "scripts" that describe exactly how data should be collected and moved. Users would then execute their scripts, thus automating data entry, data maintenance, integrating disparate applications, mining data at will, even converting entire databases—all without writing a single line of programming code.

This efficient, time-saving software would enable operations executives to maintain business data regardless of the application that created or "owns" it, and regardless of whether the data resides on Windows, Web, or legacy systems. And because this alternative technology would be operated by fully vetted professionals with proper IT user credentials, verifiable audit trails would be maintained.

Foxtrot Offers an Alternative

If your business growth is being hindered by any of the aforementioned challenges, there's good news: For more than 15 years, EnableSoft® has been providing

Foxtrot® data automation software. Since 1997, Foxtrot has been the alternative manual, unstructured processes, outsourcing, and custom-programming that have long been barriers to efficiency for so many organizations.

Today, nearly 500 businesses around the world employ Foxtrot technology to automate their data entry, data maintenance, data integration, data mining, data migration, and data testing projects. In the process, they're saving hundreds of thousands of dollars and countless man-hours as they move their data with impressive speed, complete transparency, and 100 percent accuracy.

Consider the example of a \$2 billion-asset Southeastern bank. "Interfacing our payroll and G/L systems meant importing massive amounts of data into our core processing system," said a bank vice president.

"By using Foxtrot to link our payroll processor with our G/L system, we quickly imported all the data with total accuracy," the banker noted. "We saved thousands of dollars in programming costs and software maintenance fees by not having to develop a custom interface."

For More Information on Foxtrot:

web: enablesoft.com

toll-free: 800-660-3556

email: sales@enablesoft.com