

Please do not reply to this message – see below about unsubscribing and mail formats.

Autumn 2008 Meeting Special

Below is a quick report of the meeting held last month. We're off for a few days now, but we will be putting a fuller version of this report, along with vendor presentations etc on to the website next week.

DAY ONE

Following suggestions by those members who were at our May meeting, our Autumn meeting was held over two days, with five Vendor presentations and some free time to break out of the main sessions and chat with other members.

The meeting took place in the Coach House at Warwick Castle on November 20th and 21st. The Coach House is a series of three interconnected rooms above the entrance to the Castle, and provided modest yet friendly environment for a meeting. A quick look at the feedback suggests a high satisfaction score!

Mike Booty ran the meeting, and he presented four sessions himself, on a number of related themes.

Web Utilities

Mike Booty's first session was one of two in which he showed a series of ASP-based web utilities he and his colleagues have designed to help Dream users. In this first session he demonstrated:

- an online debtors report which has the capability to write an individual debtor's details to a PDF file.
- A utility to update address and contact details

Mike explained that since all the 'programming' is done in ASP pages, the utilities can easily be tailored to suit an individual user's needs and do not need to be installed, just copied to a folder linked to the user's intranet web server. As such these utilities are more of a service than a product.

Mike also pointed out that because all data is retrieved using stored procedures, Dream's security levels can be taken into account or ignored by changing the stored procedures, which is both fast and relatively simple. To change security would not require a change to either the 'program' or the database.

Remote Data Collection

Steve Eggington of Trakware Solutions gave a presentation about 'Data Exchange', a system he has designed which allows data to be remotely collected on a hand-held device and stored temporarily in 'data pockets' on the internet before being pulled down into the user's back office system at a convenient time and in a secure manner. The system also allows data to be pushed from the back office to a data pocket to be collected by the hand-held device when it is next online.

This system supports the trend towards transfer of data by wireless technologies such as the 3G network.

Trakware's system has the advantages that it is easy to use, can be bought and set up at low cost, can be customised easily, is secure and has 24/7 availability.

Time Recording

Phil Jones of Timewatch gave a demonstration of his company's time and expense recording system and its ability to integrate with Dream.

The system is capable of raising sales invoices based on time logged and can be used at a number of different levels.

Due to dealings with another vendor, I missed some of this session, and I'll be asking one of the attendees for a fuller report.

Document Scanning (1)

Natalie Sharp of Version One gave a presentation about their system of scanning and storing documents. The Version One system is aimed at companies with the necessary volume of incoming purchase invoices.

The system offers the user speed, efficiency, cost savings and improved access to documents. At its core is a database system called DbArchive, where documents are stored and indexed. Invoices are scanned and at the time of scanning the DbCapture system collects data about the supplier, document number, etc and uses this information to index the scanned image file. A typical scanner necessary for this type of work would be a Kodak machine costing about £3000.

A very sophisticated system collects data from scanned documents as they are scanned, and uses supplier-specific templates to identify the documents and read the details into DbArchive. There is a full monitoring system for what's been scanned and users can easily see where any uncertain data needs to be checked.

The system is capable of more than scanning incoming documents, however. Outgoing documents such as purchase orders can be captured from a print spool file and stored/ indexed in the same way, reducing the need to keep file copies.

A company using this system would benefit from reduced invoice approval times.

Document Scanning (2)

Mike Booty gave a demonstration of an alternative approach to document scanning and storage, appropriate to a user with a smaller number of documents to scan and store.

The Sorsis solution, a windows forms (dot NET) solution, uses a scanner bought from PC World for £70 and a smaller piece of software developed by them.

This system works rather differently in that the document to be scanned is first posted to Dream, and on posting a small label with a bar-code is generated using the intercompany posting feature in Dream which produces a small XML file and then the 'Post & Print' feature which prints the label using the XML file after posting.

The label is attached to the document which is then scanned as part of a continuous batch of pages fed through the scanner. The system detects the presence of the label and knows a new document has been started. It reads the bar-code and so knows the document number. The scanned images are held by the program and when the user confirms the correct numbering and paging sequence, they are saved to disc linked to the document number and the attachment is linked to the document in Dream (Mike please forgive me if I've got this wrong – I'll correct it in the full web version of this report).

The Evening

The meeting decamped to the Holiday Inn in Leamington Spa, where we enjoyed a relaxed dinner, followed by a wine tasting evening hosted by Bob Price of the Birmingham Wine School, at which a few myths and several certainties were blown unceremoniously away!

DAY ONE

ASP Reporting

The following morning, and a tiny bit the worse for wear, Mike Booty continued to show us the ASP-based utilities Sorsis have designed. This time Mike focussed on reporting. He showed how P&L, balance sheet, nominal detail and other reports could be provided without the need to install a program. Whilst this is a service rather than a product there is no limitation as to what it can report on.

Mike then gave a short demonstration of SQL Server Reporting Services to compare and contrast what it can do.

Integrated Document Exchange

Richard Ward of First B2B gave a presentation about the service his company offers. Most companies can exchange data electronically in some form or other, but First B2B offer a lot more than just electronic invoicing. Integrated document exchange is a service by which a supplier sends an invoice to a customer as follows: (i) the supplier sends an electronic invoice to a secure mailbox hosted by First B2B; (ii) First B2B translate that invoice into the format the customer requires; (iii) the translated invoice is forwarded to the customer's network where it can be processed by the customer's systems. All communication is guaranteed secure by the protocols used.

The invoice sent can be in virtually any electronic format (except a scan or PDF) and First B2B will maintain a translation template for that supplier. At every stage of the process an electronic receipt is issued for documents received. The parties can also look at the document, which is held online in a repository managed by First B2B

The costing model is per supplier per annum, payable by the customer.

The advantages of this system are (a) that it requires fewer IT skills at either end of a transaction, (b) that it isn't restricted to invoices – other transactions can be passed electronically (orders, GRNs, stock issues, etc).

Richard gave some real-life examples of significant returns on investment achieved by his clients using this system.

Spend Control using Purchase To Pay

Tony Pickering and Clare Woolcock of the Proactis Group gave a demonstration of their P2P (Purchase to Pay) system. P2P offers three-way integration with Dream whereby supplier data is read from Dream, budget data and commitments are read/written from/to Dream and purchase invoices are posted to Dream.

P2P is one of a suite of 8 programs including PurchasePoint (sourcing and requisitions), Employee Expense Control demonstrated at our spring 2007 meeting), Contract Management and eSourcing, amongst others.

The advantages of using P2P for spend control are manifold. Users will benefit from increased visibility of spend, better control of commitment, reduction in maverick purchases and reduction in the costs of purchasing.

Because P2P is browser-based it can be rolled out to any number of users effortlessly. Its simple interface makes purchasing very straightforward where it needs to be, whilst its sophisticated customisation ability allows very tight control on authorisation and workflow. Users see as much or as little of the program as they need to. The business of placing an order (or a requisition) can be reduced to a single click, where the user orders the same things regularly, or can be made sophisticated enough to allow buyers to code the items purchased to multiple nominals and cost centres.

Users get reminders about their orders, documents they need to authorise, deliveries, etc. Alerts can be sent by email, and (for line managers) authorisation can be made as simple as replying to an email.

The system includes a dashboard for those who need real time monitoring of key indicators and also a host of reports, which are delivered to Excel, PDF, etc.

An administrator's program (the Management Console) allows system administrators to control how the program works.

Over lunch Clare gave a further demonstration of PurchasePoint.

Statements, Remittances and More

Mike Booty gave a fourth presentation. Whilst the Sorsis Web Utilities and ASP reporting can be delivered as one package, the same program in which document scanning is managed offers a number of other windows-based program elements.

Remittances can be produced based on playlists you have created in Dream. Statements of Account can be produced based on outstanding balances on customer accounts and correspondence can be generated using account data in Dream.

The program makes clever use of SQL Server Reporting Services report files to deliver the statements and remittance advices. These can be previewed, amended and sent electronically as email attachments or faxes.

A full audit trail is kept within a separate Sorsis database.

Mike then gave a demonstration of how to create a SQL Server Reporting Services report.

The AGM wasn't held as no council member was ready with a report.

Object

The objective of the DREAM User Group is to provide services to Member organisations using the DREAM accounting system produced by CODA plc. The User Group will provide information and hold meetings, and will make collective representations to CODA and others for the general benefit of the Members.

Subscription

This message was sent to you because your organisation (which is a member of the DREAM User Group) has previously nominated you as an individual member, or because you attended our spring meeting. To unsubscribe, please click [here](#).

Mail Format

If you would prefer your messages in plain text, please let us know by clicking [here](#).