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Microsoft Business Solutions Showcases ERP Strategy and Road Map

Customers Benefit From Five Development Themes and Ongoing Product Investments

REDMOND, Wash. -- June 16, 2004 -- Reaffirming its commitment to innovation across its family of business applications, Microsoft Business Solutions today announced ongoing investments to enhance its enterprise resource planning (ERP) product lines, which offer financial management, supply chain management (SCM), customer relationship management (CRM) and business analytics functionality. Over the next 12 months, all four ERP product lines -- Microsoft® Business Solutions--Axapta®, Microsoft Business Solutions--Great Plains®, Microsoft Business Solutions--Navision® and Microsoft Business Solutions--Solomon -- will see significant enhancements, underlining Microsoft Corp.'s strategy to continue development for these solutions and meet customer needs as they evolve.
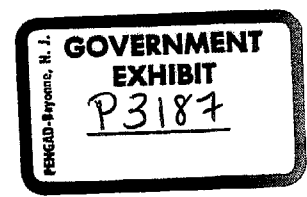
The product strategy for these solutions involves five customer-centric technology themes that the ERP products will center on moving forward. Each technology theme -- Best Total Cost of Ownership, Adaptive Processes, Empowered Users, Connected Business and Insightful -- addresses a fundamental area in which a business application meets a customer need.

"Business managers tell us they have a core set of operational requirements that they are concerned with above and beyond individual product features. These five product development themes transcend our individual product lines and focus on providing customers with holistic solutions to their business problems. Microsoft Business Solutions has long earned a solid reputation for delivering a high degree of value by listening to customers and incorporating that feedback into our product development strategy," said Satya Nadella, corporate vice president of Microsoft Business Solutions. "Our strategy and commitment is to continue investing our research and development efforts in our four ERP solutions to ensure that customers have a choice of the product that will best meet their needs today and address new and complex business challenges in the future. It's what our customers expect from their technology investments, and it's what we will consistently deliver."

Microsoft has worked closely with customers to define requirements for these development themes, for example, Empowered Users.

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"Participating in opportunities like the customer beta program has allowed Stulz-ATS to directly and positively influence Microsoft Business Solutions products," said Michele Holsinger, Information Systems manager at Stulz Air Technology Systems Inc. "We've worked with forthcoming enhancements, particularly those made to the Microsoft Great Plains user interface, and it is rewarding to note that these product improvements are a result of our feedback. I see Microsoft listening and know that each product release will be the most robust solution possible to meet my specific needs."

Katherine Jones, research director with Aberdeen Group, said the strategy Microsoft Business Solutions employs to develop and deliver multiple ERP products is essential to meeting the needs of today's largely underserved and fragmented global midmarket segment. "Core financial management functionality is critical, of course, but it's equally important to go beyond that and provide customers with choices that can be made according to their own unique business needs and circumstances," Jones said. "This need for choice is particularly prevalent in the ERP market for small and midsize businesses. Here you see a whole range of demands for customization versus out-of-the-box, versus industry specialization, and so on. It's a dynamic need that can't be offered by a single solution, so flexibility is key."

Maintaining a rich partner ecosystem is also a significant component of delivering maximum value to customers through the multiple ERP product strategy. Microsoft Business Solutions works closely with its value-added reseller partners and independent software vendor partners to ensure that each of the ERP products provides core financial management functionality and beyond to customers; each solution also offers unique features and functionality to meet the specific needs of different organizations based on size, industry, business processes and, in some cases, the geographies in which they conduct business.

- Microsoft Axapta supports advanced manufacturing and supply chain management in addition to core financial management for the upper midmarket segment and for divisions of large organizations or multinationals.
- Microsoft Great Plains offers midmarket segment businesses cross-industry financial management, with rich out-of-the-box functionality and a broad set of add-on solutions.
- Microsoft Navision is also known for cross-industry financial management for the lower midmarket to midmarket segments, as well as for the ease with which it can be customized to accommodate the unique business processes of the local market in which it is implemented.
- Microsoft Solomon provides financial management with particular strength in the areas of project management and accounting and distribution; the solution targets organizations in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Microsoft Great Plains 8.0 is scheduled to be available beginning in June. Microsoft Solomon 6.0 is scheduled to be available beginning in July followed by Microsoft Navision 4.0 scheduled for later this year and Microsoft Axapta 4.0 scheduled for next year.

About Microsoft Business Solutions

Microsoft Business Solutions offers integrated business applications and services that allow small and midsize organizations and divisions of large enterprises to connect employees, customers and suppliers for improved efficiency. The financial management, customer relationship management, supply chain management and analytics applications work with Microsoft products such as Office and Windows® to streamline processes across an entire organization, giving businesses insight to respond rapidly, plan strategically and execute quickly. Microsoft Business Solutions applications are delivered through a worldwide network of channel partners that provide specialized services and local support tailored to a company's needs.

About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

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