Boston Analyst Roadshow SYSPRO Update: New SCM Tracking Solution, and Surprising Results of Customer Survey

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It's already became a worthwhile annual tradition to check in with business software vendors that are clients of JRocket Marketing each December in Boston. This time analysts had a chance to see what's new at SYSPRO and meet the top management of Elysian Field Software, a new company that will be officially launched in the near future.

SYSPRO's New Voyage and Container Tracking Solution
SYSPRO's big news as of late is its new supply chain management solution, called Voyage & Container Tracking Solution for SYSPRO ERP. SYSPRO decided to enter this space because of the recent movement of many of SYSPRO's manufacturing and distribution customers into overseas supply chain operations— these customers still need to have full inventory visibility and accuracy regardless of the location of their operations. Typically ERP software does not offer such voyage and container tracking options, so SYSPRO clients have had to consider third-party software options along with the inevitable accompanying integration issues. Now those companies can do all their tracking in the same SYSPRO ERP package. It took SYSPRO a while to develop the solution and then to fully test it (for two years) with a New York-based cosmetic component manufacturer and distributor, but the solution is now available for all of SYSPRO's customers.

The new piece of software consists of three main components:

- Release Matrix—manages and identifies items available for shipping with visibility of items mentioned in either purchase or sales orders

- Container Management—allows users to determine what items travel in what container and consolidate purchase releases or transfer order releases into single or split formats

- Disposition Management—manages delivery and processing of multiple containers in a single voyage or shipment number. Also manages disposition in voyages and shipping numbers, as well as quarantine visibility, transactions processing, and voyage modifications.

SYSPRO's Voyage & Container Tracking solution could be especially beneficial for companies considering deployment flexibility of SYSPRO ERP as the new supply chain management application will inherit on-premise or cloud deployment according to customer preference. The solution also uses the capabilities of SYSPRO Analytics to make timely and knowledgeable decisions.

SYSPRO Customer Survey Reveals Problems in Big Data/Analytics Messaging
Also worth noting are the results of the regular SYSPRO's SNAP Survey of customers' opinions (SNAP stands for SYSPRO Needs Answers Please), dedicated to big data and analytics this time around. The audience for the survey was C-level management for manufacturing and distribution companies in the SMB space. Overall, I believe a quick survey is a great and effective tool for software vendors, to keep an eye on the opinions of their customer base, and to be in close touch with the businesses they serve.

But the answers for the very first question of the SYSPRO—"Are IT and ERP big data market messages easy to

understand?"—do not leave any doubts regarding how badly SMB managers estimate the efforts of the software marketing community have been on clarifying the big data concept overall. An impressive 96.3 percent of respondents find the various ERP and IT market messages about big data difficult to understand or only somewhat understandable. The numbers are not much better for a similar question on analytics and business intelligence awareness and the quality of marketing messages—only 7.4 percent believe that these concepts are easy to understand, although the BI and analytics concepts have been around for a much longer time.

These are surprisingly disappointing results, and a clear message to all involved, including the software analyst community (which, obviously, does not exert adequate efforts to make those concepts easy and clear enough for people managing real businesses). The traction of BI, analytics, and big data understanding among SMBs is unacceptably low. Another conclusion we can make based on this data is that software vendors have a potentially large market and great opportunities within medium and small companies, at least in terms of BI and analytics solutions, as big data seems to be less of a concern for small and medium companies so far.

Elysian Field Software To Fill Market Niche
Another interesting team we met during the roadshow is Epiphany, a NetSuite reseller partner (my colleague Raluca Druta also wrote about Elysian Field Software on the TEC blog recently). Brenda Brinkley, the president and CEO of Epiphany, Inc. introduced plans to launch another company—Elysian Field Software, which is supposed to start operations in the second quarter of 2015.

Two separate divisions of Elysian Field Software will encompass Epiphany's existing business on NetSuite reselling and implementation, and a new business line based on delivering cloud-based human resource/human capital management (HCM) and field service management (FSM) capabilities. So the support of Epiphany's existing 114 customers will eventually be transferred under the new company administration. In fact, this shouldn't be a problem as the team will remain the same. The new line of business—HR/HCM and FSM applications—will initially be available for NetSuite ERP customers, but the company is planning to extend the offering to users of other ERP platforms later this year.

The new company has ambitious plans to fill a market niche of cost effective cloud-based HCM and FSM solutions for lower midmarket companies that, at the same time, will be fully practical and complete in terms of available functionality, from application tracking and compensation management on the HCM side to technician skill management and warranty management on the field service side. With all these aspects considered, I guess Elysian Field Software has the potential for an interesting future and a very good chance of having a commercial success on the market. I'm expecting to hear from this company again around June 2015, so we will be able to shed more light on the software and how the vendor is doing at that time.