

Inforum 2012

CIMdata Commentary

CIMdata recently attended Infor's Inforum 2012 in Denver, Colorado. For 2012, the event was combined with the former Lawson CUE user conference. It was positioned as a global event with attendees interested in all of Infor's business lines and geographies supported. Infor stated that they expected over 5,000 attendees. The theme for Inforum 2012 was "Go Faster" and Infor continually discussed speed as the driving factor for businesses in today's global marketplace.

Charles Phillips, Infor's CEO, was the keynote speaker on the morning of Monday the 23rd of April. He discussed the evolution of Infor, particularly the new management team and product strategy. He stated that they have transitioned from a company that was just making acquisitions to one that is increasing their investments in research and development to create new products and solutions for their customers. Mr. Phillips also stated that while they announced they would hire 400 new software engineers in their last fiscal year, they actually hired over 600. He went on to state that they are organized by industry and have and are currently developing micro-vertical applications in each of their focus sectors. Their overall approach is to find the common elements across segments and incorporate them into their core products.

Key to Infor's strategy is ION—Intelligent Open Network. ION is meant to provide a loose coupling of applications based on XML document exchange, a form of Service Oriented Architecture (SOA). ION is the vehicle for integrating Infor's multiple product suites into seamless environments and is also the mechanism for integrating with other products and applications including legacy applications, such as those that run on AS 400s. However, ION is more than just an integration mechanism—it is an IT platform and includes multiple services including a common user interface (UI), data vaulting, real-time access to standard business services such as purchase orders, business intelligence and a searchable, filterable Twitter-like data feed called Infor10 ION Pulse. All ION-managed information transfers are captured and maintained in a business vault that is then searchable. This provides a single source of knowledge across all ION-enabled applications.

They have (for ION powered applications) developed and are delivering a consistent UI across all products called ION Workspace. Workspace allows flexible tailoring by users and provides many social computing paradigm capabilities. The other big factor for Infor is "context." They have built a context engine within ION and in all applications are working to provide functionality in context to the user—search, display, dashboards, analytics, reporting, etc. This is another core component of their approach to a commercial grade user experience. All users want to work "in context" so that they get precisely the information they need, when they need it, in the form in which they need it. Infor's support of context across their business solutions should help improve user productivity and their customers' competitiveness. This is another positive step in Infor's new product development strategy that enables customers to better leverage Infor solutions.

Infor believes that ION, with its loosely coupled architecture, is a distinct competitive advantage enabling them to win significant new business both in the installed base and in competitive procurements. Their strategy is to "Engineer for Speed" and "Specialize by Industry," and use ION to deliver a common user experience across the entire suite of Infor

offerings. A good example of this strategy is Infor10 Process (Optiva) in which they have used ION to integrate their least cost formulation and global label capabilities with their advanced planning capabilities within their ERP suites. This enables their customers to rapidly and dynamically adjust their product planning based on formula changes driven by ingredient costs as well as to create new product variations.

Infor also announced the integration of Infor10 PLM Process (Optiva) and Lawson M3 ERP Enterprise designed to provide a complete process industry-specific application that enables customer to more quickly develop and deliver products that meet regulatory and statutory requirements. Infor10 PLM Process (Optiva) and M3 ERP Enterprise are brought together pre-configured using the ION technology and Infor10 Workspace to provide a common user interface across PLM, ERP, and other Infor applications. The integrated applications provide a more complete solution that supports the business cycle from concept generation and product development, through to sourcing, manufacturing, sales, and finance, connecting the product development and production processes.

Infor also demonstrated and discussed their mobile strategy, which has been designed to enable users to work via the cloud on multiple devices (e.g., iPad, iPhone, and Android based). However, the Infor10 PLM solutions are not currently updated to be mobile solutions (they are on the long term roadmap). They are incorporating social media paradigms within all their products.

Infor also has an aggressive cloud program and are delivering several new capabilities via the cloud. Their objective is to provide customers with the ability to deploy via the cloud or on-premise interchangeably. Two new capabilities announced at Inforum are Local.ly (not yet released) and Update S. Local.ly is designed to enable customers to develop their tailoring and customizations in the cloud so that they can be easily upgraded over time. Update S essentially enables customers to create a cloud-based sandbox to test releases and customizations prior to upgrading their production systems. The ION Connect service provides connectors that link cloud based and on premise solutions. This enables customers to determine where it is best (in terms of performance, cost, support, etc.) for them to execute the specific functionalities they need to improve their business and personnel productivity.

Infor, with their new management team and product strategy, has made significant changes in their product suite. CIMdata is very positive about these changes. With ION as the underlying platform they are delivering a very broad scope of solutions that can work together seamlessly. More importantly, by creating a set of common services and technology, they are enabling their customers to continue to leverage their previous investments as they move forward with new solutions and technologies. By incorporating mobility applications and an ability for companies to work with applications and functions both on-premise and via the cloud, we think Infor will be able to provide a level of flexibility that can enable their customers to improve their operational effectiveness while maximizing their IT investments. This will be especially important to Infor's small to medium size business (SMB) customers who have the same business needs as large enterprise companies but need to be able to continue to use their current solutions with less IT investment.

Infor has transitioned from a "buy customer base and let everyone do their own thing" to a company that is providing leading technologies and solutions that deliver broad, tailored capabilities that support industry specific needs. They are providing solutions that incorporate and leverage the many acquisition investments they have made in the past. Infor's new strategy and technology platforms should significantly improve their competitiveness in the global enterprise software market. By providing an effective integration platform (ION) that

provides information in context within a common user experience, Infor has strengthened its ability to compete in the enterprise software market, not as just a provider of applications, but as a provider of solutions tailored to a company's needs.

Infor has a broad installed base (reported to be over 70,000 customers) and the ability to use ION to deliver seamless working environments and user experiences across their many different business solutions provides an opportunity for major growth both in the SMB markets and with larger enterprise customers.

At Inforum there was clear customer enthusiasm for Infor's new direction and the solutions they are delivering. CIMdata shares that enthusiasm and believes that Infor can become a major force in the enterprise software market.

About CIMdata

CIMdata, an independent worldwide firm, provides strategic management consulting to maximize an enterprise's ability to design and deliver innovative products and services through the application of Product Lifecycle Management (PLM). CIMdata provides world-class knowledge, expertise, and best-practice methods on PLM. CIMdata also offers research, subscription services, publications, and education through international conferences. To learn more about CIMdata's services, visit our website at <http://www.CIMdata.com> or contact CIMdata at: 3909 Research Park Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48108, USA. Tel: +1 734.668.9922. Fax: +1 734.668.1957; or at Oogststraat 20, 6004 CV Weert, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 (0) 495.533.666.