

Inforum 2014

CIMdata Commentary

Key takeaways:

- *Infor has established a partnership with Aras and will rebrand and sell the Aras Innovator suite to provide expanded PLM capabilities for discrete manufacturers*
- *Infor will now be able to provide PLM solutions tailored to individual customer requirements regardless of company size and product complexity*
- *Infor continues to develop and expand the use of a common, context sensitive user interface across all of their products to provide a consistent user experience*

CIMdata recently attended Inforum 2014 in New Orleans, Louisiana—a global event with attendees interested in all of Infor’s business lines. Infor stated that over 7,000 people attended the event. Overall, CIMdata was pleased with the continued evolution of Infor’s product suites and the introduction of both a new PLM solution for discrete manufacturers and their CloudSuite portfolio. Infor’s Hook & Loop internal creative group is continuing to design a user interface paradigm for all its products that should be much more intuitive, effective, and easy to use. (This internal design agency approach is also used by companies like IBM and Dassault Systèmes.)

Charles Phillips, Infor’s CEO, and other Infor executives led a multi-speaker keynote session in which they discussed Infor’s success during 2013 (during which they added over 3,000 new customers), their progress in developing and delivering new products and services for the enterprise market, and their plans for the future with their “Work is Beautiful” theme. As part of this theme, Infor stated that they will create experiences that people love (e.g., the UI designed by Hook & Loop) and will speed the time-to-value for their enterprise customers.

Infor is delivering their new products under the CloudSuite brand, e.g., Infor CloudSuite Business. There is no CloudSuite PLM but on October 15, Infor released CloudSuite Food & Beverage which includes Infor Optiva as an option, and Infor VISUAL, a business solution for manufacturers, includes many PLM-type functions.

From a PLM perspective, the most important announcement at Inforum was Infor’s partnership with Aras and the initial availability of Infor Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) Innovator, powered by Aras. This addresses a gap in their PLM for discrete solutions. The current Infor PLM Discrete solution is very effective for small to medium businesses with basic needs, e.g., product data management (PDM), and simple configuration and change management. However, it is limited in its ability to support larger organizations and those with more complex products and development needs.

CIMdata believes that Infor PLM Innovator is an excellent and much needed addition to the Infor PLM product suites. It will provide an upgrade path to a more comprehensive PLM environment for current PLM Discrete customers that need additional functionality. It will also enable Infor to deliver a competitive PLM solution for their larger customers and prevent those customers from having to use third-party solutions such as Teamcenter, ENOVIA, or Windchill.

“When manufacturers experience limited visibility across the product lifecycle, they are not equipped to speed time to market or enhance the quality of their products,” said Soma Somasundaram, Executive Vice President for Global Product Development at Infor. “Infor PLM Innovator delivers the necessary tools to create a unified view of production, from

conception to the supply chain. Organizations across multiple industries, whether it's discrete manufacturing or automotive, can leverage this technology to optimize each step within each process, ultimately creating time and cost savings for the company.”

Currently available in limited release, Infor PLM Innovator will provide the Infor 10x user experience and will be integrated through Infor ION[®] with Infor SyteLine and Infor LN, two of their enterprise resource management (ERP) offerings.¹ Going forward Infor will be using their integration, social business collaboration (e.g., Infor Ming.le[™]), and context-driven UI technologies to provide a rich user experience for the Innovator platform. This will enable Infor to differentiate their Aras-based offering from standard Aras solutions, and will provide additional reasons for their customers to acquire Infor PLM Innovator rather than licensing directly from Aras. In either case, Aras gains a broader customer base.

Infor will continue to develop and support its current discrete PLM solution, Infor PLM Discrete, for those companies that do not need the larger capabilities provided by Infor PLM Innovator. This two-level approach will enable Infor to tailor their solution more closely to the requirements of their individual customers.

CIMdata also thinks that this partnership will also be good for Aras. It provides them a large installed base into which their technology and solutions can be delivered and deployed and gives them additional royalty revenue opportunities.

“By teaming up with Infor we are able to reach a wider range of customers with our enterprise PLM suite, and deliver an integrated experience to Infor customers worldwide,” said Peter Schroer, CEO of Aras. “Our partnership gives companies a subscription-based PLM option that's highly scalable and can be deployed in data center, cloud, or hybrid scenarios with compliance-grade security.”

The other major PLM-related announcement was that of the ongoing user interface strategy and new products designed by Hook & Loop, based on HTML5. Hook & Loop is the internal creative agency of Infor, located at the company's headquarters in New York City. This energetic think tank is composed of more than eighty talented creatives—writers, designers, developers, and filmmakers—working together to solve problems. It is the engine that drives innovation around product design and user experience across Infor's entire suite of business applications, as well as the agency that communicates Infor's vision to customers, partners, and the industry.

Infor SoHo is a user interface that Infor is adopting across its various enterprise applications. It is based on social media technologies and uses a context-sensitive, situational awareness paradigm. As stated earlier, this new UI will be incorporated into the new Innovator-powered PLM solution to provide commonality with other Infor product suites. This new UI paradigm will enable users in all parts of the enterprise to access and use information in multiple domains (via the ION integration of Infor business solutions) in a seamless and consistent manner—a big step forward for a company with as large a solution portfolio as Infor.

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

¹ Note that the product name Infor PLM Innovator has not been finalized and may be modified before being placed into general release.

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.