

## INFOR SCORES A 10

*Dan Roberts points to the rebirth of a mainstream ERP player.*

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**Dan Roberts: not just a legacy vendor**

Infor is currently touring the globe to launch its latest product set – Infor10. And while the product details are interesting and indeed innovative, of more interest is the launch of a whole new Infor. The arrival of Charles Philips as CEO has really shaken things up.

Just a few years ago, Infor's main message was that it was not ditching any of its acquired products. Loyal customers were reassured that the software they were using to run their businesses would continue to be supported for the foreseeable future.

Those reassurances were needed at a point of uncertainty for the huge customer base, as their business-critical software (referred to as legacy software by the analyst community) was swallowed up amongst many other similar products.

Now while that message has not been discarded, it is no longer the only message. The virtue of having a large portfolio of products with different strengths that might matter in specific vertical industries is being played up to its full extent (although those products themselves barely get more than a passing reference).

However, the message at this latest series of events is all about new products. Granted the new products in question – ION, Workspace and the associated tools – are all designed to make the most of that heritage of diverse products. But they are so much more than just a way to integrate a series of best-of-breed products.

At its core, ION provides just that – a loosely coupled integration solution that enables all of Infor's products to work together (as well as some of its competitors' products). Add Workspace to the solution and there is also a modern interface, giving all the products a common look and feel.

The latest version of Workspace has some very neat features, the most impressive of which is contextual information. An information bar along one side of the window provides snippets of data related to the item selected in the main window.

For example, if the user clicks on a product, then the contextual bar might provide the latest regional sales figures for that product in a small chart. User settings guide what information is provided to enable the most efficient working environment.

The ability to pull information into the side bar is not limited to Infor products, but any that are ION-enabled. One example being shown is the Buzziant app, which provides a snapshot of information from social networking sites. Product managers can see customer comments right in their ERP system.

ION itself is much more than just an integration solution. Each ERP transaction running through the ION middleware generates a report to a central data store. The format of the stored data is designed to make it easily accessed by the business intelligence (BI) tool.

Instead of querying the live transaction database, the BI system queries the separate data store. This makes it much less onerous on the transaction database. And because the data store is updated continuously, the BI tool is working on real-time information. Add some in-memory processing and you have a very modern, powerful business tool.

It is worth pointing out that all these new features are only just being released, so have not been tested by hundreds of users. Cambashi always advises companies to undertake a thorough evaluation process before choosing a business-critical solution such as ERP.

However, Infor's new product range is important not just for its own sake, but more as a statement about the direction of Infor as a company. So if you have previously dismissed Infor as an option because of a perception that it is just a legacy vendor, then perhaps you should reconsider.

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