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Drastically Reduce Time to Quote and Deliver Targeted Solution Configurations

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When searching for the right solution to meet their business needs, organizations don't want to go to several different product and service vendors to piece together the perfect solution. More often, they seek out larger, end-to-end solution providers that can configure the hardware, software, technical services, and even financials they need in a single preconfigured offering.

Larger high-tech vendors with the right level of resources are embracing this opportunity to meet a broader set of customer needs. But they are also finding that creating a customized preconfigured solution — even just for quoting purposes — is no easy feat. The vendor's sales reps and engineers must match each customer's needs with the right hardware and software elements to provide the right configuration. Any mistakes in this early stage can lead to costly errors and wasted time down the road if it turns out that software X doesn't work well on hardware Y.

Even with an apt understanding of technology, putting together an end-to-end solution for a quote is not a quick and efficient process. In fact, for many providers it remains a very manual undertaking. Sales reps and technical engineers must manually compile the information and specifications for the hardware, software, and services, which can produce errors. This ad hoc process can take weeks or even months, frustrating both the vendor and customer.

This challenge of manual processes and a long time to quote is not a new problem. But as something of a niche concern for large solution providers, it has been slow to gain attention. To help

these providers and their customers, SAP focused its innovative problem-solving ability on this challenge. Inspired by the experience of going to a computer store and getting a customized platform built on a machine quickly, SAP developed a similar process to suit complex enterprise solution configurations.

The **SAP Solution Sales Configuration** application, released in late 2011, is an on-premise add-on to SAP Customer Relationship Management (SAP CRM) or SAP ERP. The application gives solution vendors the ability to easily configure hardware, software, and services components to create a complex solution for their customers without the risk of the various components not working together.

Reduce Time to Quote with Bottom-Up Configurations

SAP Solution Sales Configuration greatly reduces a provider's time to quote by automating the configuration process from the bottom up using a unique sales configuration engine. The sales team starts by plugging in the prospective customer's functional, technical, and budgetary requirements using an intuitive interface. From there, the application will propose products that address those requirements and develop the right configuration. There is no need to check for the technical feasibility of the components because the application's rules-based engine will only suggest options that will work in harmony. This removes the possibility of the sales team making manual errors due to gaps of knowledge about the products.

SAP Solution Sales Configuration also provides continuous pricing updates, so every time a new component is added to the overall solution package, the pricing is updated to reflect that addition. This is particularly helpful when the solution must fit within a potential customer's set budget.

Once the budgetary configuration has been done and a first draft of the solution quote has been handed over to the customer, the sales engineers complete the solution configuration from a technical perspective (see the "SAP Solution

Sales Configuration from a Technical Perspective" sidebar). This collaboration between the sales reps and engineers enables the vendor to provide a complex solution tailored to the customer.

From a business perspective, SAP Solution Sales Configuration enables sales teams to ramp up quickly, expediting the sales process. The application gives solution providers the ability to go from a high-level specification to a detailed specification without having to plug in all of the master data typically required. The configuration engine can also address commercial requirements, such as meeting a minimum margin or accommodating an upselling campaign for dedicated products within the solution configuration, as well as technical and functional requirements, creating a total solution for the customer.

SAP Solution Sales Configuration from a Technical Perspective

Prior to the quoting process, modeling engineers prepare the solution configuration data using the Eclipse-based Solution Modeling Environment that comes with SAP Solution Sales Configuration.

The application reduces model data maintenance by allowing engineers to use any code repository, full syntax completion, and check support, and enables them to view model objects graphically and to import classical mode (ERP variant configuration or Internet Pricing and Configuration) model data.

The Solution Modeling Environment speeds the testing and validation stage with fast tracing, profiling, and test-script recording and execution. The Eclipse plug-in can be used online or offline, so there is no need to always be connected to a back-end system to perform these processes.

Experience Seamless Integration and Leverage Analytics

The SAP Solution Sales Configuration application seamlessly integrates with SAP CRM 7.0, SAP ECC 6.0, and SAP NetWeaver 7.30, although it is not limited to these platforms. However, when being used in an SAP environment, SAP Solution Sales Configuration can leverage analytics applications such as SAP BusinessObjects Explorer to determine which configurations are most popular in which markets or industries. Or, for example, advanced analytics tools can factor in competition data and financial or compliance laws in different geographical regions, giving the vendor the best possible solution configuration for clients in specific markets.

Benefits of an Automated Configuration Process

1. Faster and More Efficient Time to Quote

The SAP Solution Sales Configuration application streamlines and minimizes quote response time. More deals can be closed if quotes developed for complex solutions are realistic and informed. The application's intuitive interface helps sales teams work more quickly and accurately.

2. Market Differentiation

Complex solution configuration allows innovation in your product offerings and enables you to tailor solution bundles to your customers' specific needs.

3. Data Integration and Process Transparency

Business and technical product knowledge is centralized to ensure business and technical feasibility. Complex solution configuration results can be stored and used throughout the sales cycle.

Learn More

SAP Solution Sales Configuration was developed in response to a real customer need and solves a real business problem. Understanding that the configuration process is critical to some organizations' business, SAP developed the solution to help these companies speed their quoting and delivery processes and expedite the path to end-user value.

To discover how the SAP Solution Sales Configuration application can change the way your company configures end-to-end solutions, please visit http://help.sap.com/crm_ssc10 or https://websmp103.sap-ag.de/~sapidb/011000358700001299372011E/R_FBSUCT10.htm. ■