

Ramco brings 'affordable' analytics to SMBs

Announces Gateway products and new distribution partners

By Brian Pereira

Small and Medium Businesses are feeling the need for full-fledged ERP software. But it must be simple to operate, easy to deploy, and agile enough to change with business needs. And of course, it must be affordable. Tight cash flows and thin margins make it almost impossible for most SMBs to make down payments for software licenses and services. And that's why cloud-based products with OPEX models are more suited to these businesses.

Ramco Systems has been selling a SaaS-based ERP solution to businesses in North American, Canada and other English-speaking nations for years. It was also vending an analytics solution called DecisionWorks. Ramco has now fused the two products, offering 'pre-engineered' analytics with ERP on the cloud to SMBs. Specifically it launched Ramco OnDemand Analytics and Gateway products on the cloud. With this announcement Ramco purports to make analytics and ERP affordable, and accessible to businesses of all sizes. It is also offering businesses flexibility in adopting ERP with a "build-as-you-need" strategy through its new Gateway products. The company currently has over 3,000 users in 40 plus countries for its hugely popular Ramco OnDemand ERP (dubbed RODE), and expects to touch 7,000 users in the next 12 months.

Speaking to *InformationWeek* in Chennai, P.R. Venketrama Raja, Vice Chairman, Managing Director & CEO, Ramco Systems said, "We are one of the few ERP companies in the world who have completely re-architected the

ERP product to make it unique. It has high automation and its architecture is such that it requires little programming to adapt to changing business requirements — yet it is simple, flexible, standard and powerful."

The dynamic nature of business requires enterprise applications such as ERP to adapt fast enough to changing business needs. And companies such as Ramco Systems are modifying the product architecture so that the application transformation occurs at a faster pace, with minimum effort and cost. Traditionally, teams of software engineers in services companies were put to the task of modifying the product as they all tried to keep pace with changes in the business world.

Incidentally, Ramco has applied for 16 worldwide patents for this unique architecture, three of which are granted, with another three or four expected this year.

The unique architecture (a platform called Ramco VirtualWorks) lets Ramco adapt its ERP products for any vertical. Its solution is now used in more than 70 verticals ranging from textiles to auto components and leather; service companies, dealership, trading, mining,

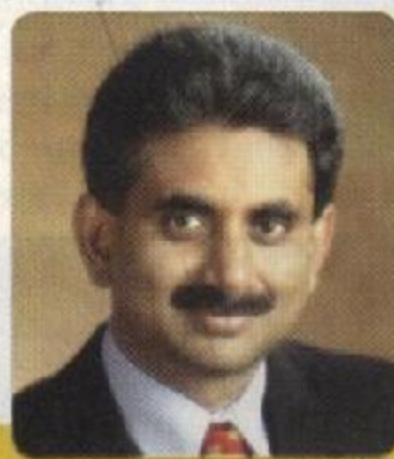
property management, logistics. Traditionally, Ramco has been a strong player in the Aviation industry.

"Because our ERP is so flexible we can adapt it even for niche verticals," said Kamesh Ramamoorthy, COO, Ramco Systems. "This quick enablement is possible because of our platform called VirtualWorks — a platform for creating verticalized solutions. Because of the high level of automation and the flexibility that it offers, the entire development cycle is drastically reduced".

ANALYTICS

Ramco Systems is also addressing the huge demand for analytics. Transactional data captured in Excel sheets or data warehouses is quite useless if it does not offer quick insights and actionable information. This would help businesses react quicker and respond to situations in a matter of a few hours. For instance, a chain of medical stores can monitor the stock levels to take advantage of bulk purchase. With 'pre-built analytics' the system can generate alerts when the stock levels fall below threshold levels.

"When companies deploy ERP they



"We are one of the few ERP companies in the world who have completely re-architected the ERP product to make it unique"

P R Venketrama Raja
Vice Chairman, MD & CEO, Ramco Systems

also spend a lot of effort and money for putting in analytics, and supporting it. We have now fused analytics in our ERP solution so all businesses (regardless of size) have analytics at an affordable cost," said Raja.

Pricing details for Ramco OnDemand Analytics were not disclosed but a spokesperson said it would be an "incremental cost" for existing customers.

Explaining the 'pre-built analytics' feature Rajasekar D, Executive Vice President, Cloud Computing solutions & BI, Ramco Systems, said the business KPIs are built into the analytics.

"For instance, if every invoice of a supplier needs to be paid within 90 days, the KPI will throw up alerts as you near deadlines. The pre-built CRM Analytics can monitor the KPIs of salespersons. We call this lead analysis and opportunity analysis," said Rajasekar.

Ramco has made it simple for its existing base of ERP customers to enable the pre-built analytics. It has done so by cleverly infusing pre-engineered analytics in its cloud ERP product. So existing ERP customers have a way to quickly "switch on" the analytics functionality. Others will need to go through the 'plug n' play' mode.

"They need to only configure the analytics. Since it is on the same cloud



"The pre-built CRM Analytics can monitor the KPIs of salespersons"

Durai Rajasekar
Executive Vice President,
Cloud Computing Solutions and BI,
Ramco Systems

as the ERP and the customer's data. So it becomes easy to implement, and it is well integrated," said Rajasekar.

The other USP is that the analytics is compatible with other ERP products via a set of connectors.

IPAD ENABLED

Top management executives in SMBs spend a lot of time travelling to meet customers and suppliers. So Ramco is offering a way for them to access operational and production data on their iPads.

"This (analytics) is available to customers on a dashboard and also on an iPad. This would enable an executive on the move to take a look at this data and make a decision without switching on his PC and logging to the net. Decisions can be taken in the presence of customers, suppliers and other business peers, using updated MIS on

iPads," informed Rajasekar.

GATEWAY PRODUCT

The company also announced Ramco OnDemand Gateway products to enable customers to quickly adopt business applications, and then graduate to a full-fledged ERP, without replacing the existing system. Gateway products offer a fusion of transaction and decision support systems (ERP with self-contained analytics), thereby supporting both operations and decision-making.

One of the key features of the Gateway product is its Zero touch/self-service implementation. The product is highly templated and the entire enrolment and on-boarding processes are automated. Users can easily learn the functionalities and processes using the self-training kit.

The gateway products will predominantly be sold through strategic partners like Aircel and NIIT. CRM will be the first Gateway product to be launched in July 2011. The others in the pipeline are Distribution Management, Fixed Assets, HR & Payroll and Service Management System. 

The writer was hosted by Ramco Systems in Chennai.

► **Brian Pereira** brian.pereira@ubm.com



"Because of the flexibility that our ERP offers, the entire development cycle is drastically reduced"

Kamesh Ramamoorthy
Chief Operating Officer, Ramco Systems