

Refresh™ for IT :

Fresh International provides a very practical software called Refresh™ for standardizing and enriching the data that you use to describe any line items bought using your ERP systems.

In this chapter we will be looking at challenges and opportunities specifically for IT professionals supporting Supply Management, Procurement, Operations, Finance and Controlling Functional Areas leveraging ERP software. The contents of this chapter have been written by IT experts from various businesses who have been deeply involved in some of the world's top 10 largest ERP implementations.

Refresh is a very specific software tool which was designed and developed by ERP experts to serve one single purpose – the automatic standardization of item data at lowest total cost of ownership. This has been ensured by designing Refresh in such a way that the customer's current IT assets are re-used. For example no additional hardware is needed, no custom development is needed and your existing ERP makes calls to Refresh, not the other way around so there are no security concerns. Objects are delivered in a namespace registered with the ERP provider and no user-exits or enhancement spots need to get activated. Of course no modifications to standard ERP programs are required. Since all of these often hidden support costs are minimized by design, cost and risk is much lower than any other approach. IT's overall headcount for a typical Refresh project is only a few days.

Refresh today contains dictionary content amounting to millions of lines, making the Refresh dictionary the largest in the industry. This key content powers your ERP system so that data standardization is automated – quickly building information like short texts, long texts, PO texts and spend classes automatically.

The Refresh Software is currently live at many leading companies and governments globally running SAP, Oracle and other leading ERP systems. Refresh can get you up and running in a matter of days & standardizing your data an order of magnitude faster.

If you think you may be able to use our tools to unlock value from your systems please contact us.

Refresh™ Software Functional Discussion Document: What's in it for IT Professionals?

Overview:

Here we will summarize some important points about the pressure IT departments face in today's economy and the key challenges and opportunities faced specifically in the area of data standardization. We then look at how the Refresh approach provides key accelerators and ways to reduce IT cost and Risk in your projects. For alternative approaches to Refresh including other less-automated approaches to Item Data Standardization please see the Refresh vs. some alternatives chapter. It is assumed here that you already have a good idea of the functionality provided with Refresh. If not, detailed discussions and screenshots looking at the Refresh functionality for Operations, Maintenance, Procurement and other functional areas are all available in the other chapters in this series.

Over the last 15 years IT professionals from Fresh International have been working in Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) projects, specifically focusing on getting the tougher business benefits out of the ERP systems already implemented. Since 2003 we have been addressing these issues through development of our Refresh™ software which is live today in companies using various ERP systems such as SAP, Oracle and others. For the purpose of this discussion we will use SAP as the example where we want to be specific but the reader should keep in mind Refresh today brings the "missing piece of the puzzle" to Non-SAP ERP systems too.

A new focus area – with inherent uncertainty & cost:

IT professionals are used to dealing with uncertainty – they are skilled at weighing up risk and reward and have had lots of practice in managing projects and software vendors. Some of the large ERP providers have a lot on their plates and in general are not able to meet all the key functionality needed by today's demanding business functional teams. Some areas have not been the main focus of ERP providers and so most companies have a hybrid mix of ERP and point solutions. This is of course also true of Operations and Procurement functional areas.

Table 6: Procurement Solution Preferences - Application Type

Process	Best-in-Class	Industry Average	Laggard
Hybrid mix of ERP and point solutions	39%	27%	25%
Integrated modules of ERP	28%	33%	40%
Procurement suite (single provider)	23%	24%	25%
Collection of point solutions (multiple providers)	7%	10%	7%

Source: Aberdeen Group, September 2010

Mixing ERP & Point Solutions is best in class today

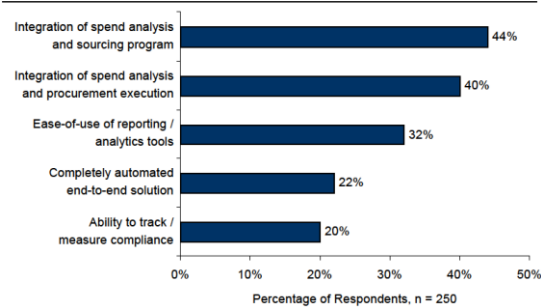
But given the considerable cost to integrate and look after point solutions within your overall ERP footprint it is very important to try to cover as much functionality as possible with your ERP provider's tools. There is a cost/opportunity balance to be considered whenever looking at the two approaches. Our overall approach is always to use existing ERP tools wherever remotely possible.

"SAP is behind some of the competition in data quality, data profiling and associated reporting facilities, which are important in complex product data environments that are heterogeneous in nature. Many customers report having to refer to other tools in this area as part of their implementations. The acquisition of Business Objects enables SAP potentially to leverage some of the data services related to profiling and data quality, but even Business Objects' experience was generally associated with customer data and not product data"
Gartner, July 2009.



Whenever it is not possible, leading IT departments tend to look for complimentary solutions that provide maximum business functionality coverage at absolute lowest total cost of ownership. This TCO should include license cost, maintenance cost, lifecycle internal IT support costs, additional hardware costs, additional database license costs, software custom development and configuration cost, cost of interface development & maintenance, not to mention risk. If the software being bought has not been specifically designed to minimize these costs by maximizing the re-use of your existing architecture these costs tend to add up very quickly. For example integration costs and integration risk are today some of the leading drivers in the selection of procurement tools in organizations according to IT research firms:

Figure 3: Criteria for Spend Analysis Solution Selection



Source: Aberdeen Group, July 2010

All software has to "fit-in" with what we have today

This is where the IT professional often comes in. Stuck between a rock and a hard place – between the burning business need and the costs of adopting new software. In our experience it is a place where IT can really provide benefits.



IT can really help to minimize total costs

On this page (2 of 3):
Get Involved in this key topic

About Refresh™:

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Fresh International was founded in 2003 with the sole purpose of developing the Refresh practical auto-matching algorithms, the process and design of which are the subject of an important patent. The Refresh Software has been enhanced since, using a unique interaction with key customers including many leading companies and governments globally.

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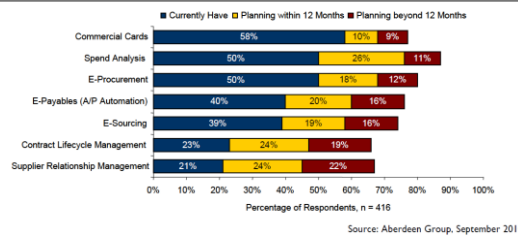
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Refresh™ Software Functional Discussion Document: What's in it for IT and Compliance teams?

Get involved in a key IT topic

Data standardization of items (materials – stock or non-stock, purchasing line items, invoice line items) holds a fantastic potential for modern organizations. And the potential for benefits increases as the level of standardization increases (of course up until a point). Most organizations today have tried to standardize to some degree either before ERP go-live using ETL (extract, transform, load) tools at data conversion time, or after the fact by scrubbing the data once it is live. It would be an ideal world if the exact level of data standardization was achieved for each data field before go-live. This is of course never the case and in general it is the tougher data standardization jobs with many line items that without a very specific toolset to speed things up, either get watered down or drag the go-live date. A delayed go-live is seldom an option and so data gets loaded as-is. Over time, without a specific tool to help govern the data it also tends to get worse. This is the current status-quo for many organizations and is especially true of many data fields important for Purchasing and Operations businesspeople. For example, the importance of spend visibility for spend analysis projects has become a burning topic for Purchasing.

Figure 3: Current and Planned Technology Adoption



A hot business and IT topic these days

If we take the most popular topic above - basic spend analysis is a relatively easy concept. It can be covered using your existing tools as shown in the good example below. However the devil is in the detail and you will need very well codified and standardized materials in order to truly benefit.

SAP BW	BI > P2P > SPEND ANALYSIS	Total Spend	Material S
Code	Material Group (Spend Category)	1,694,395,155.95 USD	333,439,620
A00000	Construction	15,685,648.73 USD	290,139
B00000	Energy	130,523,771.83 USD	74,173,450
C00000	Fixed Plant & Equipment	37,460,571.23 USD	24,605,281
D00000	Logistics	38,421,621.37 USD	470,907
E00000	Mobile Equipment	96,318,984.95 USD	43,351,350
F00000	MRO & Consumables	83,054,244.99 USD	53,791,443
F01000	General MRO	59,033,988.11 USD	41,859,152
F02000	Electrical and Instrumentation	17,187,411.73 USD	6,044,844
F02000	Electrical and Instrumentation	11,173.64 USD	11,173
F02001	Electrical Hardware & Equipment	8,461,965.86 USD	2,237,896
F02002	Batteries	245,261.77 USD	245,261
F02003	Electrical Consumables Supplies	4,048,690.08 USD	2,498,873
F02004	Instrumentation Equipment & Components	4,420,320.38 USD	1,051,638

Trustworthy Spend Analysis – use your existing ERP

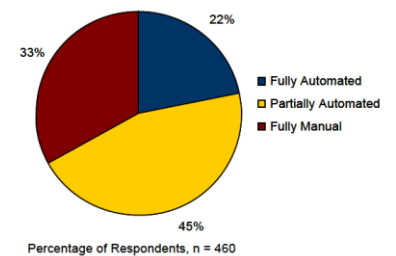
Spend analysis is not a once-off exercise so keeping them in good shape is imperative and not so easy without some sort of automation. This entails keeping existing materials clean and making sure any newly created ones are up to spec.

From the 2010 AT Kearney Survey of Indirect Purchasing:

“More Automation on the Wish List

While purchase-to-pay (P2P) systems have been around for more than 10 years, they are not applied as widely as might be expected (see figure 4). One explanation may be that the tools are still evolving; another is the price tag. Even so, survey participants are aiming to use automated tools in line with best practices, as demonstrated by their ambitious tool deployment plans. They expect to increase the automation of spend management by 60%”.

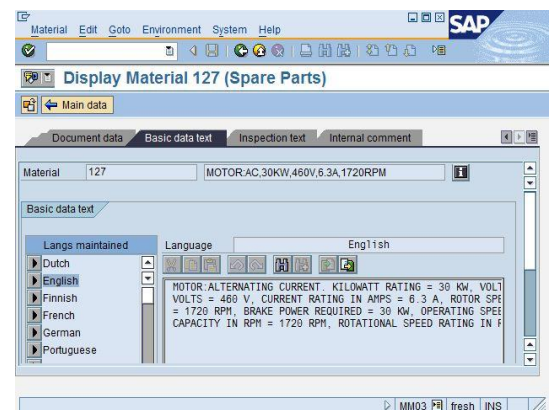
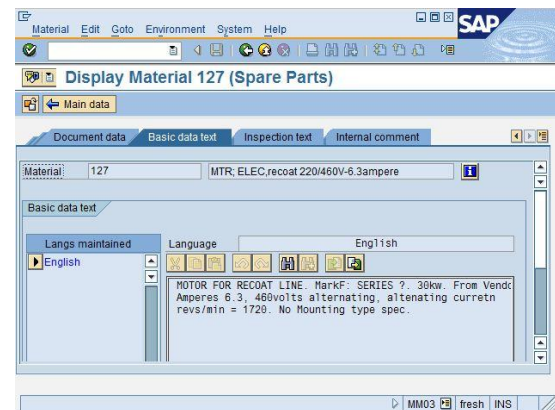
Figure 4: Automation of Spend Analysis



Source: Aberdeen Group, July 2010

A lot of room for improvement today

It's not just our purchasing colleagues that have a strong interest in standardization. In operations and maintenance, especially in engineering-strong companies, engineers and storekeepers really need automatic ways to spec their many materials consistently so that they can find them fast, procure the right ones at lowest cost and share between sites.



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Get Best Practice Fast

- Rapid Implementation – be running within a week
- Built-In dictionaries leverage man-decades of expertise
- Built-in translations mean a quick roll-out everywhere
- Shared knowledge base from existing customers
- All international standards pre-scored for your industry
- Refresh Desktop install via wizard in minutes
- Refresh Server install in an hour e.g windows & SAP

Refresh being used to auto-enrich & translate an item in ERP

At lowest Total Cost of Ownership

- Low Software Cost
- Low Maintenance Cost
- Niche product – buy only what you need, no extras
- No Additional Hardware Required
- No additional Database licenses needed
- Packaged export, import and workflow pre-delivered
- Any ERP Integration pre-delivered in your technology

Material creation workflow example – ERP calling Refresh

At lowest Risk

- Refresh Desktop is standalone – low IT involvement
- Refresh Server does not make any updates directly in your ERP system – no ERP login required
- No modifications to standard ERP programs required
- No custom development is needed
- Fresh delivers any objects in registered namespace
- No user-exits or enhancement spots needed
- Refresh Server is the slave, called by the ERP master:

Refresh being called by ERP to standardize a ball bearing

Re-use your current tools

- Standard file formats and programs delivered for your existing tools – e.g Excel, ABAP, WebDynpro, LSMW
- International standards and item content is delivered by Fresh open in Excel format for easy configuration.
- Use your ERP's built-in workflows, security and databases – don't implement yet another on top
- Your IT department will easily understand how Refresh works – its written with their ERP technology in mind
- Refresh Desktop users can easily work in Excel
- Get more ERP buy-in from your business users – give them good data & easy ways to really use std ERP
- Create a buzz around new user-friendly functions in your ERP projects. Refresh brings truly user-friendly functions to your tough-to-please ERP user groups

Finally use the standard ERP functions the easy way