WINSHUTTLE™

10 Places SAP® Customers Can Reduce Data Management Costs

Summary

The drive to cut IT costs rises or falls in priority, but never completely goes away. Successful IT organizations see cost cutting as one aspect of a focussed effort to continuously improve efficiency, rather than a blunt response to bad news.

This white paper highlights 10 key places SAP customers can reduce IT operational costs, with a focus on trimming support and data entry costs by automating data entry. It is intended both for leaders of SAP competency centers and for business process owners looking for ways to "do more with less."

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Introduction

Automating routine data loading into SAP applications is an obvious place to cut IT operational costs. This will not only reduce the costs and resources involved with manual data entry, but can also significantly reduce the burden on support organizations.

Most routine data loading projects fall in the range of 100-100,000 records, offering a significant opportunity for cutting costs. Manual data entry for such projects is not only extremely expensive, but it is also time-consuming, tedious, and error-prone. The alternative of petitioning the IT department to write programs for these data transfer projects can be a strain on a company's limited technical resources.

Empowering business users to automate data loading tasks using easy-to-use, low-cost solutions like those provided by Winshuttle can lead to tremendous savings in IT operational costs. Such products enable business users to easily automate data transfer between Microsoft Office business applications and the SAP Business Suite without programming, enabling users to solve common data loading problems.

This white paper will elaborate on some high-value use cases for data loading and will further identify areas within organizations where these use cases can lead to significant cost savings.

Four Different Cost Saving Use Cases of Data Loading Software

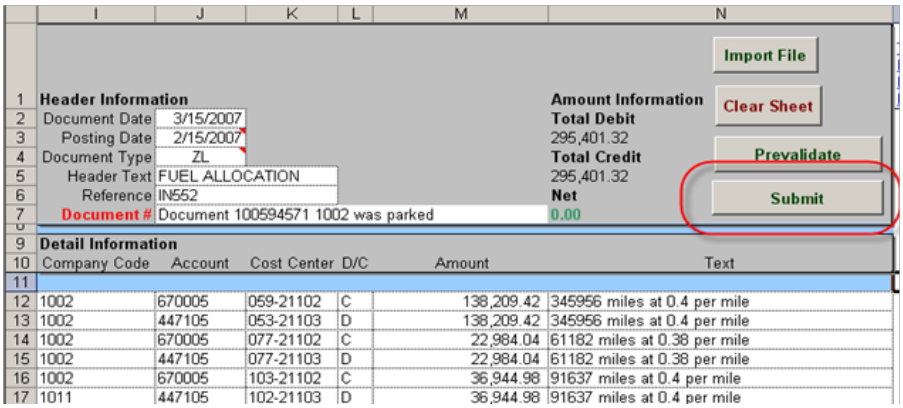
There are four common use cases where easy-to-use data loading software can yield significant cost savings in IT operational costs: Data Entry Automation, Data Maintenance, Data Integration, and Data Migration.

1. Data Entry Automation

Enabling the effective use of Microsoft Excel as a front-end to create new master and transactional data in the SAP system can lead to tremendous efficiencies in a business. With very little training, Excel users can create single or multiple records, affecting a single SAP transaction or a chain of transactions. Moreover, in most companies, data to be created in SAP applications may already exist in Excel. These records can be then loaded easily into the SAP system using data loading software, thus avoiding duplicate data entry. Excel sheets can be readily customized by business users to create easy-to-use, sophisticated data entry front-end forms.

Data entry automation can result in cost savings in many departments, such as in HR for new hire actions, in Procurement for new purchase orders or contracts, in Supply Chain for new materials and new sales orders, and in Finance for new assets.

The figure below shows one example of data intensive Excel templates set up for data entry automation in a high-value SAP transaction.



	I	J	K	L	M	N
						Import File
1	Header Information				Amount Information	Clear Sheet
2	Document Date	3/15/2007			Total Debit	
3	Posting Date	2/15/2007			295,401.32	
4	Document Type	ZL			Total Credit	Prevalidate
5	Header Text	FUEL ALLOCATION			295,401.32	
6	Reference	IN552			Net	Submit
7	Document #	Document 100594571 1002 was parked			0.00	
9	Detail Information					
10	Company Code	Account	Cost Center	D/C	Amount	Text
11						
12	1002	670005	059-21102	C	138,209.42	345956 miles at 0.4 per mile
13	1002	447105	053-21103	D	138,209.42	345956 miles at 0.4 per mile
14	1002	670005	077-21102	C	22,984.04	61182 miles at 0.38 per mile
15	1002	447105	077-21103	D	22,984.04	61182 miles at 0.38 per mile
16	1002	670005	103-21102	C	36,944.98	91637 miles at 0.4 per mile
17	1011	447105	102-21103	D	36,944.98	91637 miles at 0.4 per mile

Figure 1: A Journal Entry creation template set up in Excel to load data to the FB50 transaction. The header fields are contained on the top section of the sheet while the line items are located in the lower section. Buttons, linked to Excel macros, are set up to validate data or to post the data into the SAP system. The resulting document number from the posting is also displayed in the header section.

2. Data Maintenance

Data maintenance refers to the need, driven by business requirements, to make mass changes to master or transactional data in the SAP system. This is a routine business process that is usually the responsibility of the business process owner and can get very expensive and time consuming without the use of the right tools. While limited data maintenance activities can be performed via SAP mass-change transactions, e.g., MM17, business-driven data maintenance is commonly performed by first extracting SAP data into Excel files, making changes to the data in Excel, and finally loading the new data back into the SAP system. Data loading software such as Winshuttle Transaction™ can make the loading step of the data maintenance process much more cost effective.

Some of the common data maintenance applications in the SAP system include material master changes, pricing condition changes, customer or vendor master maintenance, payroll changes, or changes to purchase orders. Figure 2 below illustrates a sample spreadsheet for a mass transactional data change.

3. Data Integration

Data Integration refers to the process of synchronizing data between multiple disparate production systems. Many companies use systems outside of the SAP environment for specific applications, e.g., Siebel or SalesForce.com for CRM, or PeopleSoft for HR. The data between these systems needs to be consistent to ensure the existence of “a single version of the truth”.

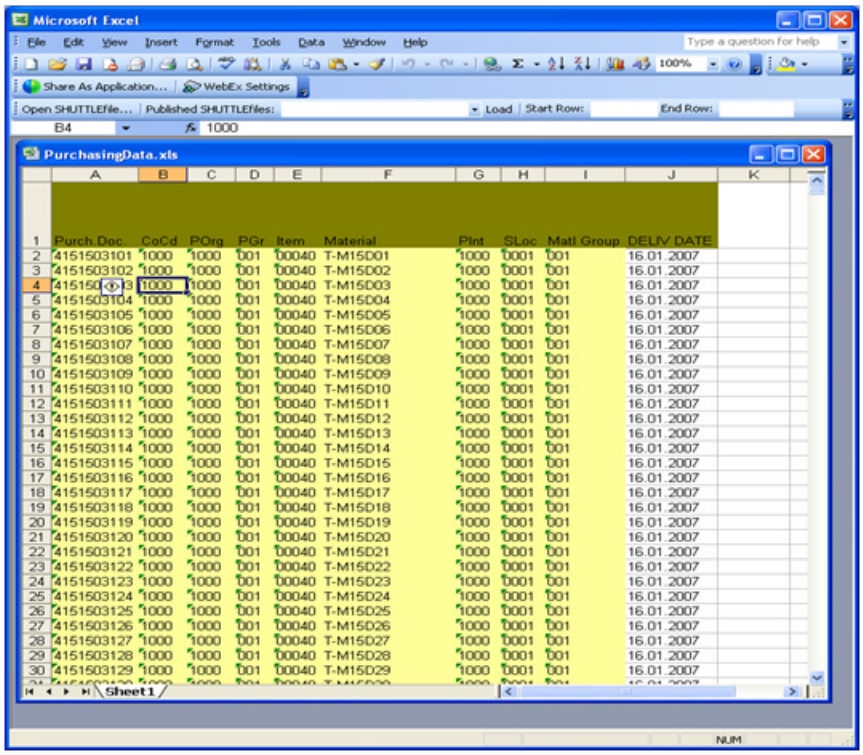


Figure 2: A sample spreadsheet set up to change the delivery date for many line items in multiple purchase orders driven by a business reason (e.g. vendor informing customer of the delay due to unforeseen events).

Additionally, transactional data, such as invoices, sales orders, reconciliation statements, etc. often need to be exchanged between the company's SAP system and its customers', suppliers', and service providers' systems. While there are a variety of software choices available for real-time data integration between multiple systems, these software packages are typically complex, have large footprints, and are difficult to install and use for business users.

Simple-to-use, low cost data loading software can be used to reduce expenses in a wide variety of data integration scenarios where Excel spreadsheets or Access databases become the common data interchange mechanism. Thus, data is extracted or received from external systems in spreadsheet formats and can then be easily loaded into the SAP system using "mappings" defined in the data loading software.

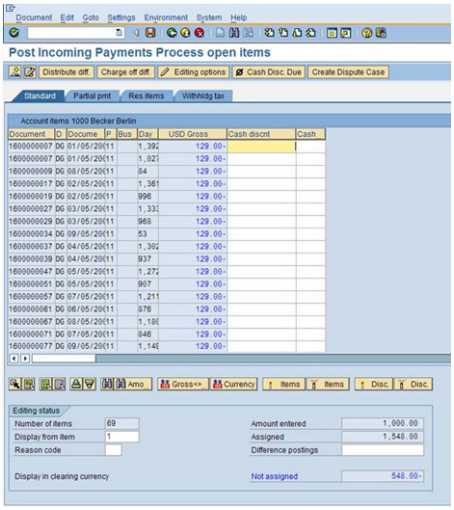
The following figures show example screenshots of a data integration scenario where the incoming cash statement from the bank is posted into the F-28 transaction of the SAP system.

4. Data Migration

Data migration or data conversion is a core activity during new SAP implementations, upgrades, or mergers and acquisition-driven consolidations. Easy-to-use data loading software can be of tremendous value during these projects and can accelerate the time to value of SAP projects. Data migration projects consist of many components, including data extraction, transformation, and loading (ETL).

Microsoft Excel spreadsheets or Access databases often become a common staging platform for the data being migrated. Data is extracted from legacy systems into Excel or Access for cleanup

INVNUM	INVDATE	GROSS	DISC	NET	COMMENT
0090285162	03/24/06	$960.75	$0.00	$960.75	3CS 332079
0090410068	04/24/06	$5,286.83	$0.00	$5,286.83	DC APPROVED - RECD
0090511996	05/19/06	$10,500.00	$0.00	$10,500.00	POD
0091276667	11/17/06	$150.16	$0.00	$150.16	200EA N7990
0091276667	11/17/06	$300.32	$0.00	$300.32	N7990
0091293557	11/22/06	($147.00)	$0.00	($147.00)	ON CR MEMO9135851
0091293557	11/22/06	$2,513.64	$0.00	$2,513.64	POD



Figures 3 & 4: An incoming receivable statement in a spreadsheet (above) is automatically posted into the Incoming Cash SAP transaction (F-28).

and transformations. After transformations have been applied, the master data or transactional data then needs to be loaded into the SAP system. Easy-to-use data loading software allows business users to carry out the final data loading step of the data migration process themselves, which leads to significant cost and time savings.

Six Different Places to Look for Cost Savings with Data Loading Software

There are six places in your organization where the right data loading software can offer the highest cost savings.

1. Sales Operations, or the Order-to-Cash Team

Data entry processes in the sales operations department offer some of the largest cost cutting opportunities. In particular, many SAP customers find that automating data loading in the following processes leads to large efficiencies:

- New customer master creation (XD01)
- Customer master changes – credit terms, block/unblock status, address, sales hierarchy, partner functions (XD02)
- Pricing conditions creation and changes including customer-specific pricing (VK11, VK12, VK14)

- Sales orders and credit memos creation, including those received directly from customers, distributors, resellers, or sales orders collected in other systems (VA01)
- Changes in sales orders/quotes – changes in pricing, delivery dates, quantities, items, location (VA02)
- Contracts and rebate agreement creations (VA41/VA42)

2. Finance & Accounting Teams

Finance operations offer another good opportunity for cost cutting by automating data loading processes. Accounting teams usually have a large amount of data that is either created in Excel or is received in Excel, and manual entry of this data is expensive and usually delays month-end closings. Some of these automation opportunities include:

- Journal entries, Accounts Payables, Accounts Receivables parking or posting, including those using Profitability Analysis/COPA fields (FB50, FB60, FB70, FB01, F-02)
- Posting invoices received from external vendors, e.g., FedEx, UPS (FB60/FB50)
- Reconciliation and entry of P-card statements, e.g., American Express bills (FB50)
- Incoming payments and other bank information (F-28)
- Customer invoices (FB70/FB75)
- Fixed assets creation and maintenance (AS01, AS02, ABUMN)

3. Human Resources Team

Data entry processes in HR operations cover all aspects of the employee life cycle including recruiting, training, transfer, time tracking and job changes. In addition, with increased M&A activity many large-scale changes are becoming more and more frequent. Common areas of automation include:

- Adding and changing personnel information (PA30, PA40)
- Creating or changing organizational information (PP03)
- Recording work time (CATS,CAT2)

4. Procurement and Supply Chain Teams

Procurement teams are commonly under time pressure to meet calendar deadlines, and also have a large amount of data that is either created in Excel or is received in Excel. Some of the automation opportunities include:

- Creating a purchase order (ME21N)
- Vendor data creation or change (XK01, XK02)
- Create or modify outline agreement (ME31K, ME32K)

5. Master Data Team

Many companies have established master data organizations whose main goal is to define the business process to create or modify master data. This includes material or product master data, customer master data, and vendor master data. Implementing the right data entry and data download tools allows these teams to handle support requests or specific projects faster and without manual data entry.

- New material creation – all views including extending materials to different plants and sales organizations (MM01/MM02)
- Article masters for retail and apparel industry solutions (MM41/MM42)
- Bill of materials, including variant configuration (CS01/CS02)
- New customers and vendors (XD01 and XK01)
- Material master & BOM changes - characteristics, MRP controller, prices, cost, components, storage location, etc. (MM02, CS02)
- Customer master changes – credit terms, block/unblock status, address, sales hierarchy, partner functions (XD02)
- Vendor master changes – tax id, payment terms, etc. (XK02)

6. SAP Application Support Team

The SAP application support team is the central point of contact between business users of SAP solutions and the IT organization. According to a recent customer presentation at ASUG (Americas' SAP Users' Group), 80% of their SAP helpdesk tickets were data related. Easy-to-use data entry and data download software allows SAP support analysts to handle these requests faster or more importantly, delegate the tasks back to the business users.

Conclusion

Automating data entry and reducing data management costs in the areas discussed in this white paper will help optimize budgets, while maintaining quality and responding faster to changing business needs.

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