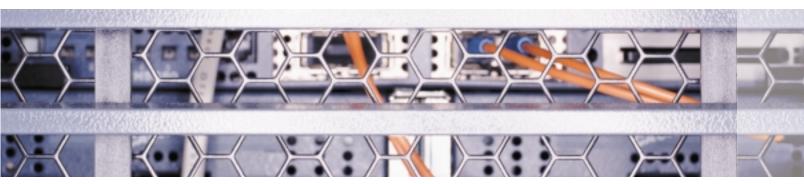# ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING BACKBONE

PowerEasy uses Sybase technology to target small enterprises with Mac OS X-based ERP > BY JON LELAND

GROWING SMALL AND MIDSIZE companies represent an expanding market for enterprise resource planning (ERP) applications. Because these applications integrate e-Commerce, logistics, and financial databases into one information resource, they are the functional backbone of many companies. All this functionality doesn't come easy, however. ERP applications require a secure, reliable, sophisticated technological platform. Small and midsize businesses need ERP applications in order to deliver all of their valuable information cost-effectively, regardless of how many employees, business partners, or customers need simultaneous access.

For a company of any size, ERP applications represent a major investment in technology and human resources. And, when they go down unexpectedly, the cost to a business goes beyond the average cost of $3,000 per hour estimated by a recent Computer Publishing Group survey. That's because there is no accounting for lost business opportunities, frustrated customers, and frustration when management is denied access to mission-critical information.

The combination of Sybase Adaptive Server Enterprise (ASE) 12.5 for Mac OS X, Apple's latest Xserve 1U rack-mounted servers, and the Mac's current UNIX-based OS X operating system has created an enterprise-class

technology foundation. This foundation underlies the kind of performance required by ERP applications, at a lower cost than Windows-based systems. (For more information on Sybase

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FIND OUT:

Why ERP applications are crucial to small and midsize companies <

About the joint ERP solution from Apple, PowerEasy, and Sybase <

What customers and analysts have to say about the solution <

ASE 12.5 for Mac OS X and a free download of the developer edition, visit www.sybase.com/mac.)

The Sybase/Apple enterprise-level platform has emerged over the last year as a cost-effective option, and the PowerEasy ERP system is the first scalable ERP application to use the Sybase/Apple platform.

The cost advantages of this platform are significant—in terms of pricing for Apple Xserve hardware, the PowerEasy ERP application, and the Sybase database. Additional advantages come from the ease of use and development cost savings provided by Apple's Mac server software and WebObjects development tools.

Kikkeri Balvenkatesh, chief operating officer of PowerEasy, asserts that this combination sets a new standard: "Today's most powerful applications tend to be difficult to use and cost more than a million dollars to own and maintain. Meanwhile, applications that are easy to use tend to suffer performance degradation in high-performance environments," Balvenkatesh says. "We believe that a product that can bridge this gap will set a new standard in the software industry."

By pricing the PowerEasy ERP at

$40,000 per CPU, PowerEasy is taking direct aim at Microsoft. Balvenkatesh explains, "We also believe that pricing our product comparably to Microsoft Great Plains yet running on a more powerful and cost-effective platform will provide a compelling argument for those contemplating a switch from Microsoft to the Mac platform running Sybase solutions. By developing our application with WebObjects 5.2, we reduce development costs and pass the savings on to customers."

A Response to Customer Needs

In a Webcast explaining the ease of use, economic advantages, and scalable power of the Sybase/Apple/PowerEasy system, Darryl Salas, Sybase's worldwide alliance manager, describes four key kinds of customer needs he believes are being addressed by PowerEasy ERP.

First is the current economic climate, in which IT budget cuts have become a fact of life. Second, customers want to find ways to reduce unplanned downtime. Third, growing companies—especially those small companies that have outpaced less-powerful systems—need solutions that will allow their information systems to keep up with

their growth while staying within budget constraints.

Finally, 21st-century businesses need full-time electronic connectivity—with their own offices, wherever they are, as well as with their customers and business partners.

According to K. R. Prasad, president of PowerEasy, "The PowerEasy ERP application has the power to support hundreds of thousands of users and transactions and to serve members of the business community while they are at their desks or on the road."

Dr. Raj Nathan, senior vice president and general manager, Sybase Enterprise Solutions Division, summarizes the advantages of the PowerEasy solution: "In today's environment, companies are more focused than ever on meeting their demanding business requirements with the most cost-effective solution possible. PowerEasy's solution, built on the Sybase and Apple infrastructure, gives customers an end-to-end solution that embodies these values and is well poised to succeed."

Growing with a Midmarket Target

Analyst Albert Pang, the enterprise applications lead at research firm IDC,

reinforces the logic of PowerEasy's focus on small to midsize companies. He says, "PowerEasy's release of the first enterprise ERP application on the Xserve platform should strengthen Apple's appeal among small to midsize companies in helping them leverage their existing investment. ERP systems will drive hardware sales as users standardize on these systems, making better use of the companies' core information assets to increase efficiency and collaboration among employees, customers, and business partners."

PowerEasy's new VP points to Apple's latest Xserve products as a reason for her commitment to PowerEasy. Chang says, "I have been quite impressed by what Apple has been doing with its platform. With Apple's recent release of Xserve RAID, the Apple/Sybase infrastructure provides a compelling story for customers who want scalable and reliable applications, ease of use, and low cost."

Underscoring its commitment to delivering server solutions to fit any enterprise, Apple introduced Xserve

were already enthusiastic about their decision. For example, Marware, a maker of Mac and other electronic accessories, was looking for a new system that could support its growing business. "Marware has always enjoyed the ease of use of applications developed by the Mac community," says Maria Martin, coowner of Marware, Inc.

"However, as we grew our business, our homegrown ERP system could no longer scale to meet our needs. When we learned about PowerEasy, we realized that we could have a reliable and

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—K.R. PRASAD, PRESIDENT, POWEREASY

Another research expert, Nathaniel Palmer, chief analyst for Delphi Group, agrees: "PowerEasy is notable for Apple in that it is a higher-end application for the Xserve platform. The midmarket is where the growth is, and that is why everybody is refocusing in that direction."

Because PowerEasy recently hired ex-Vantive and -Informix veteran Betty Chang as VP of technology, Palmer is even more upbeat. He says, "Having now demonstrated the ability to attract experienced talent, PowerEasy is building notable momentum and should be in a good position to tap the pent-up demand in this attractive niche market."

RAID in February. A companion to Apple's Xserve line of server hardware, Xserve RAID is a self-contained storage solution that holds up to 14 hot-swappable Apple Drive Modules—2.52 terabytes of data. The new design delivers a storage density that—at just over $4 per gigabyte—Apple claims is a small fraction of competitive systems', and the system includes dual 2GB fibre channel I/O. (For more information on Xserve RAID, visit www.apple.com/xserve/raid.)

Enthusiasm from Customers
Prior to the May release of PowerEasy's ERP application, participants in the company's Early Adopter Program

scalable ERP system without having to sacrifice the user-friendliness we had grown accustomed to. We knew that PowerEasy, together with Apple's Xserve, was the clear choice when we finally added up the total cost of ownership."

With so many advantages stacked in favor of this new ERP application, the opportunities to serve small and midsize businesses with cost savings and high performance are worthy of more widespread consideration. ■

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