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Siebel shop turns to SAP for support

By Jon Franke, News Editor
12 Dec 2006 | SearchSAP.com

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Faced with a patch issue that caused significant problems, and wanting to augment its existing Siebel implementation, Pittsburgh-based Pomeroy IT Solutions turned to SAP-owned TomorrowNow to support its system.

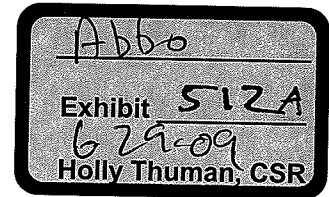
SAP and Oracle are in a well-publicized battle to take each other's maintenance and support contracts. Oracle has created a program dubbed Oracle Fusion for SAP, or OFF SAP. The program offers SAP R/3 customers a percentage of their SAP license as credit, as well as software services, to switch from SAP to Oracle software.

SAP's counter for PeopleSoft, J.D. Edwards & Co. and Siebel customers is Safe Passage, which offers similar incentives for Oracle customers to switch to SAP. Third-party support companies like TomorrowNow represent an interesting cog in this battle, as it supports products from both vendors and was acquired by SAP a year ago. TomorrowNow recently announced that 87 J.D. Edwards licensees worldwide have switched their software maintenance to TomorrowNow since the service was first offered in 2004.

There are some things companies should consider when contemplating doing business with any third-party support company like TomorrowNow, regardless of which company's software they own, analysts advise.

"A key thing companies should ask for is reassurances in the staff training schedule and access to code changes such as regulatory requirements," Ray Wang, principal analyst for Cambridge, Mass.-based Forrester Research Inc., said in an email. "For example, how quickly will [the company] react to new upgrades from the supported vendor?"

Joshua Greenbaum, principal consultant for Berkeley, Calif.-based Enterprise Applications Consulting, says organizations considering third-party support companies need to know the ins and outs of the contract they sign, as software contracts are generally not very well understood.



"Make sure you can readily break the contract without incurring penalties," Greenbaum said.

He also offered that it is important to look further ahead than just the next one to two years. There are often unforeseen issues or events that can change a company's needs.

"Make sure you know what you're doing next," he said.

The fact that TomorrowNow is owned by SAP did not really come into play in Pomeroy's decision process, but knowing that a company like SAP would buy TomorrowNow did give Pomeroy added confidence in the stability of the company, according to Karolyn Schalk, director of IT systems development for Pomeroy.

Schalk said, however, that this confidence boost would have been the same had any large company, such as Oracle or IBM, bought the company. Likewise, Pomeroy has felt no pressure from TomorrowNow to replace its Siebel software with SAP.

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Listen to what TomorrowNow's CEO had to say in our recent podcast

In Pomeroy's case, the company was faced with issues not necessarily related to wanting to switch software. Pomeroy was dealing with the fact that Microsoft had just revoked the Active-x plug-in from IE and had activated Siebel's resulting patch. The process did not go smoothly. "This was hard to troubleshoot," Schalk said.

At the same time, the company was looking to augment its installation without hiring additional staff.

"Like all smart users," Schalk said, "[Pomeroy employees] used it for a year

and then started asking, 'What about...?' 'Can we do...?' -- we were all dressed up, but had no party to go to."

Pomeroy decided to bring in third-party support and sent queries out to a company in India, Rimini Street of Las Vegas, and TomorrowNow.

One key factor was that TomorrowNow was willing to answer questions and offer suggestions on fixing the patch problem without a firm agreement in place.

Once a contract had been signed, the solution was timely and fit Pomeroy's needs. TomorrowNow set up a test environment at its own site that mirrored Pomeroy's. That way, when the solution was ready, it was straightforward to implement on Pomeroy's systems.

"It was a satisfying solution to an annoying problem," Schalk said.

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