ERP Cloud
Toolbox

Importing data into Oracle ERP Cloud with *More4apps* ERP Cloud Toolbox

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Abstract

More4apps has created an end user focused data entry method for Oracle's ERP Cloud. The More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox leverages the familiarity of an Excel spreadsheet – a method More4apps has been experts in for over 20 years.

More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox has modules for the different functional areas for Oracle's ERP Cloud.

The efficiencies achieved from using the ERP Cloud Toolbox have shown users can save around 90% of the time and effort when compared to the standard data entry forms.

Oracle offers three options for data entry and import – the traditional Oracle Forms user interface for every day operations; a technically complex mass loader with a .csv format spreadsheet loader known as FBDI and ADFdi, a semi user friendly spreadsheet integrator for a small number of data processing needs. A brief discussion of these is later in this document.

Overview

An increasing number of organizations are looking for more efficient ways to create and update data for the Oracle Cloud to reduce costs and maximize the value of their new ERP system investment.

Business As Usual

The options Oracle has provided for spreadsheet integration with ERP Cloud are frankly, a huge disappointment for end users. FBDI was designed for migrations only. Pushing it onto end users is not ideal and in some cases takes more effort than just using the data entry form. For a small number of business processes, Oracle provides a more user-friendly ADFdi integrator. This can work for some data elements but not many and most organizations find them too clunky and finicky for post go-live use.

Implementations

A lot of focus is put into the implementation phase of a ERP Cloud product. Typically, organizations can go live quicker than ever before, partially due to the reduced opportunities to customize the software but also because Oracle provides web services and FBDI to help consultants on the project migrate data. These are designed for technical consultants and high-level super users. In cases where end users are required to participate, they tend to require a lot of hand holding. With the release of the More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox, organizations have a new option for the migration of some data elements where the end users get to control the data migration process.

More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox Product Overview

The ERP Cloud Toolbox consists of 2 key distinct areas.

- ## ERP Cloud Toolbox on the PC

  Each PC requires installation of an Excel Add-in. This is easy to install and creates an additional tab in the standard Excel ribbon menu.
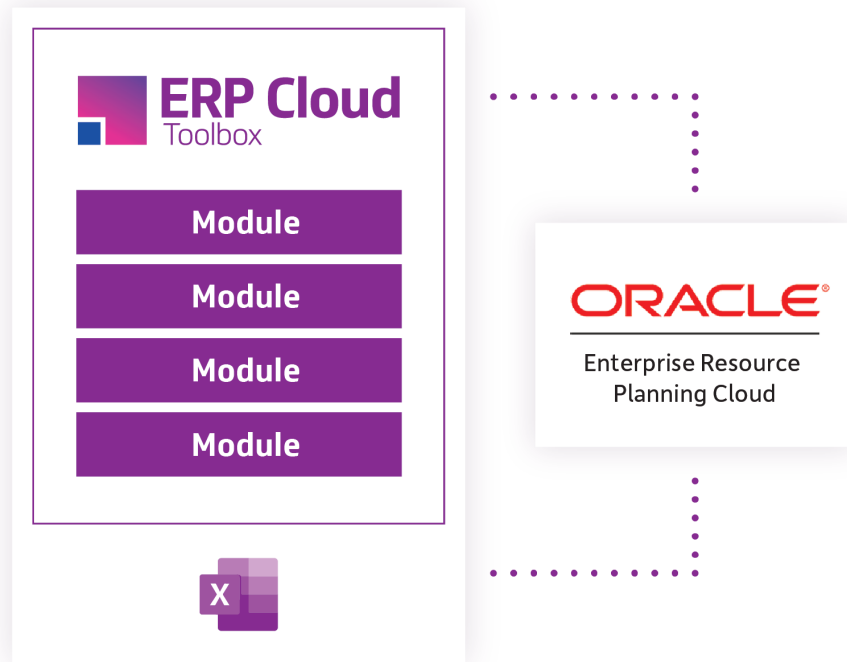
- ## ERP Cloud Installation

  Each instance of Oracle's ERP Cloud requires new BI reports to be imported.

Security

Oracle ERP Cloud roles and privileges verify access to web services. These services underlie our Excel Add-in Modules. Roles and privileges are used to grant or revoke the ability to call web services and therefore upload and download data.

The ERP Cloud Toolbox does not contain any security configuration options, including which users are allowed to use the software. It is up to the customer site to control use of the software by assigning roles and privileges as appropriate.

ERP Cloud Toolbox User Process Flow

More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox products have been created to make life easier for the end users as well as IT departments, making data entry and mass updates fast and secure.
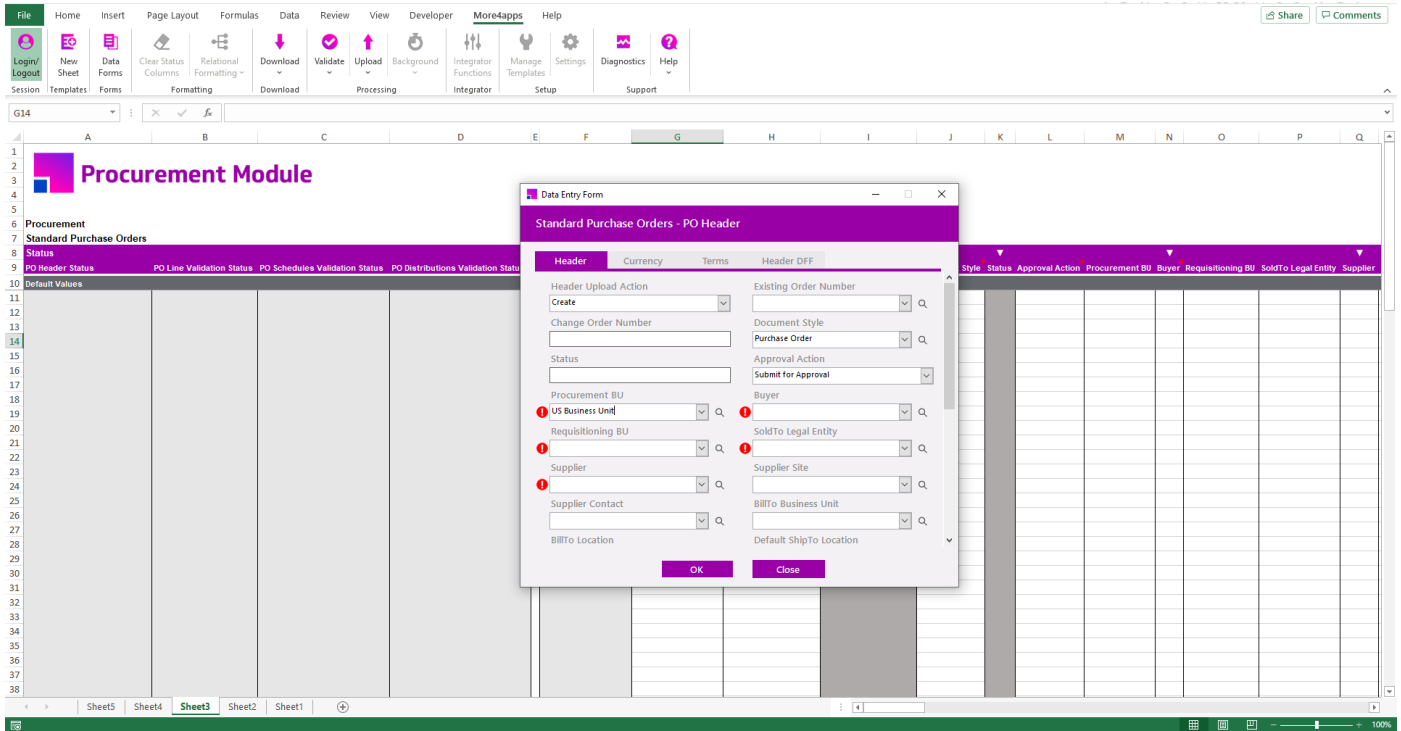
The product allows users to download data from Oracle ERP Cloud, for example existing purchase orders and then use the data to either make updates or create new data records.

The module will provide multiple options to enter or complete a dataset, from using standard Excel functionality (type data in, copy/paste, formula...) to using the embedded More4apps user form. This user form will help end users to find a value from a list of values and get live validation of the dataset.

Benefits to users

Oracle ERP Cloud is a forms based application. Forms are great for small amounts of data and terrible for large amounts. Spreadsheets are great for large amounts of data, but usually do not have the functionality of the forms.

In an ideal world, users are empowered by a smart spreadsheet which is fully supported by forms functionality. This is what the More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox provides.

The module will validate data prior to any upload and provide feedback on each data element, making it quick and easy to fix errors before re-uploading.

Comparison with File-Based Data Import (FBDI)

FBDI is designed primarily for migration, it can also be used to update existing data, however update functionality is not consistent over FBDI templates and the template design is for a more technical user rather than an end user.

Key issues with the FBDI model are more around usability. For example, there is no method to easily populate the data sets. Secondly the user has to join different worksheets for loads where there are multiple sections of data, for example header record and line record information.

The feedback mechanism for errors isn't designed to help a user fix the issues easily. In most cases it is just a .pdf report. Changes made to the spreadsheet are very manual as the user has to reconcile the report with the spreadsheet data. Not having a method to pre-validate data before loading is a severe constraint to the loading process. However, if the loads are for migration and the data set is large and static (i.e. customer or suppliers) then a consultant or high-level user could work with FBDI.

There are some use cases where it will work, especially with simple, single record data sets but as a business as usual integration method it has many flaws.

Comparison with Application Development Framework Desktop Integration (ADFdi)

Oracle has provided some seeded ADFdi templates for users. In some respects, these are similar to the More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox, however they are still limited in functionality and capability. For example, there isn't an ADFdi for standard purchase orders. Additionally, the end user forms are also limited, users can only pop up each field, one at a time, rather than see all the data and lists of values for an entire section of data. ADFdi is nearly real time but not quite, for most instances there is an import process that runs as a separate request, feedback is returned once this process has been completed. This is still far more advanced than FBDI.

Anecdotal evidence from ERP Cloud customers is that the ADFdi template provided for AP Invoices is very limited and doesn't live up to the expectation of a true end user spreadsheet interface.

There is also a high level of re-testing and patching required to keep ADFdi working. This is an area where More4apps has excelled when dealing with the similar Web ADI product for e-Business Suite.

With these headwinds to using ADFdi, More4apps will provide integration functionality for many areas supported by ADFdi to provide a true end user experience.

Below is a chart outlining the features of each method.

	Oracle User Forms	Oracle ADFdi	Oracle FBDI	ERP Cloud Toolbox
Designed for End Users	✓	✓	✗	✓
Supports Mass Data Entry	✗	✓	✓	✓
Sheet Data Entry	✗	✓	✓	✓
User Data Entry Forms	✓	✗	✗	✓
User Customizable Layout	✗	✗	✗	✓
Realtime Data Validation	✓	✓	✗	✓
Form/Sheet Error Feedback	✓	✓	✗	✓
Data Upload is Supported by Oracle	✓	✓	✓	✓
Download Existing Data Objects	✓	✗	✗	✓
Secured End User Connection to Oracle	✓	✓	✓	✓
Robust and Stable	✓	✗	✓	✓

ERP Cloud Toolbox Product Roadmap

The first product to be released is the Procurement Module for ERP Cloud Toolbox, this is the first of many products coming to the market. The More4apps product roadmap includes integrations for Projects, Trading Architecture, Assets, Payables, Inventory and more. Planned enhancements to the procurement product include features to create and maintain requisitions, supplier sourcing and PO Receiving. The product range will be expanding all the time.

Moving from e-Business Suite?

More4apps has a range of products to help you clean up your data in e-Business suite before moving to Oracle ERP Cloud. There will also be options to allow you to use both the e-Business suite and ERP Cloud Toolbox products to help your migration.

Conclusion

When it comes to performance differences for end users between FBDI, Manual data entry and More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox for Purchase Order creation the results are overwhelmingly in favor of More4apps. 3 simple purchase orders with 20 lines took 45 minutes to create manually. Surprisingly it took another 45 minutes using FBDI. With More4apps the same data set took just 5 minutes to upload.

These values don't take into account the error / feedback loop process or the improvements in data quality when uploading from a spreadsheet. If we included these the performance differences would be even greater.

Each data entry option has its place, FBDI is more aligned to migration. ADFdi and More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox focus on the end users, with More4apps being more aligned with an easier to use product with even more focus on the user experience.