

# B & L NEWS

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Enterprise Software for Metalcasters

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## What's New at B&L

by Matt Gacek, B&L Sales & Marketing Manager

While the economy is slow, B&L is still as busy as ever writing new code, developing new products, and further enhancing our existing products. In a nutshell, here is what is new at B&L.

### Odyssey SaaS Is Released

Odyssey SaaS allows you to do what you do best; make castings. Odyssey SaaS allows us to do what we do best; manage, protect, and enhance Odyssey and your data. More and more metalcasters are realizing the benefits of not having to manage hardware or software. To duplicate Odyssey SaaS, most companies will have to fork over thousands and thousand of dollar. If you are considering Odyssey you owe it to yourself to review Odyssey SaaS. As we like to say about Odyssey SaaS, "no software, no hardware, NO HEADACHES!"

### Odyssey Shop Floor Manager Nominated for Prestigious Award

The Odyssey Shop Floor Manager was recently nominated for Product Innovation of the Year by softwareCEO.com. This product is absolutely incredible. Think about this, virtually any information your shop floor needs, you can now present with touch screen capabilities and no custom coding is required. We have been overwhelmed with our customers wanting this installed. We have to thank both the B&L R&D department and you, our customers, for your valuable input.

Great part about the nomination is we used your comments when we submitted the nomination form. When asked what makes the Odyssey Shop Floor Manager unique, you've told us "The ability to present literally any information to the shop floor in the way they want to see it, without custom programming." It was very easy to write up the nomination form thanks to your feedback. We will keep you posted on the results!



"Doug" dancing on his desk.

### Doug Hinman's 20th Anniversary

On February 20th we celebrated Doug's (VP of R&D) 20th anniversary. A catered lunch was followed up with department skits and some videos. Basic gist was we gave Doug a hard time and laughed a lot. If I have the courage, I will post the videos on the website. They are funny.

### Odyssey Release 4.2

This release is chocked full of enhancements you asked for. I think Purchased Castings will be the most widely used enhancement. If you are buying castings from another foundry or die caster, you owe it to yourself to review this module. Special thanks to Sivyer Steel for all of their help with this module. We are scheduled to release this newest version in April. All maintenance clients will receive this new version at no charge.

That is it for now.



## Take Two

by Phil Laney, B&L President

We've got two great conferences planned for this year to help you get the most out of your B&L software implementation.

### Executive Conference June 1-2, 2009 New Buffalo & Bridgman, MI

Designed for busy, top-level executives at our client sites, this 1 1/2 day conference will provide interesting insights into the potential benefits of B&L software. Sessions will include product overview and direction by the B&L management team, fellow foundry and die cast users sharing

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## CONGRATULATIONS

H&H Castings, Inc., York, PA, Received ISO9001:2000 Certification



Frank Roorda, B&L Business Consultant

### Automatic Requisitions from Shop Order Creation

So it's another typical day at the office and you are chewing the fat with the company's purchasing agent, Fred Farkle. Actually, the only one chewing any fat is Fred; you just came to get your fair ration of office supplies which are locked away in Fred's office. Fred uses the opportunity to tell the story of how he single handedly negotiated a 10% price decrease from all of Caterpillar's suppliers several years ago when he was a buyer there. Had it not been for an untimely downturn in the economy a few years back, he would probably have made Vice President.

All of a sudden the phone rings and it's the manufacturing manager. You can tell it's going to be interesting when Fred turns white and starts stuttering back, "What inserts.....of course.....I'll get right on it." You also imagined that he used the word "Pledge Pin" as he was sitting there stammering and spitting, but who knows. Fred throws an armful of office supplies in your direction and off you go. It seems that Fred forgot to order some important inserts for a production job, and now the job has to be stopped until another batch of them can be brought in.

Fred should have used the Automatic Requisition feature in Odyssey. Here is how it works. First you will go to the Odyssey material inventory master and define several key fields so the system will create an automatic requisition and cut it on a timely basis.

In the Material Inventory Master (Figure 1) you will check the box so that this item will Auto Create. Next you will select the method to create the requisition from (shop) Orders. Finally you will indicate that the price for the requisition will come from the Material/Supplier pricing table.

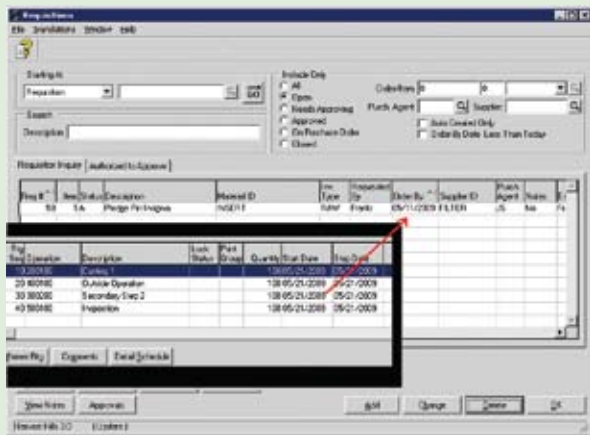


Figure 1

From the Material Supplier pricing screen (Figure 2) you will fill in pricing and other pertinent information for this material. The lead time is very important since it will take the scheduled start date of the operation that consumes it and back schedule it by the lead time provided, so that you order the material in ample time to begin production.

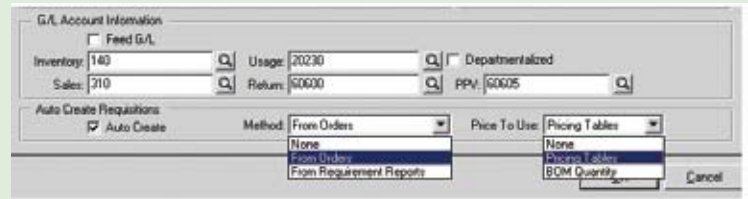


Figure 2

Figure 3 shows the relationship between the Shop Order and the Requisition that it created. Note that the "Order by" date of the item being requisitioned is 10 days prior to the scheduled start date of the operation that consumes it. This is based on the lead time we defined in the Material Supplier pricing window for this material.

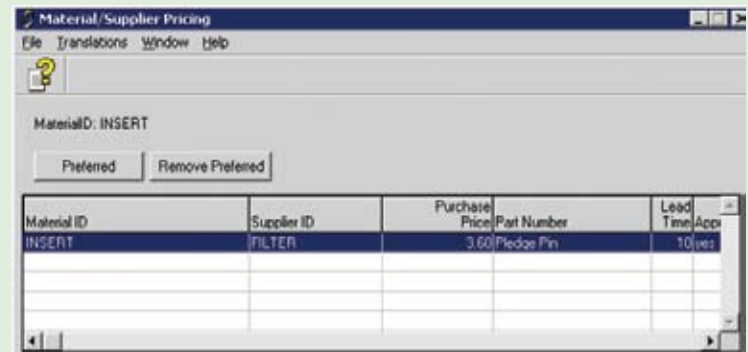


Figure 3

Although it has not been shown, there must be a bill of material attached to the labor routing step. You will do this through the labor routings of the product master. This not only allows the requisition to be created, it also allows for the consumption of the raw material when the labor step is reported.

There are other ways to create requisitions for materials, and perhaps we will explore those in a future newsletter article. I hope Fred Farkle gets his system straightened out; it would be a shame if he lost his pledge pins again. ■

## Crystal Tips

Helpful tips for Crystal Reports users.

Ever have a report that is grouped on Customer ID (e.g. customer.custid) but you need it to be grouped by Customer Name (e.g. customer.name) instead? Perhaps a salesperson is having trouble identifying who the customer is. Well, there is an easy way to change that.

When you have the report open in Crystal, right-click in the grey area of the customer ID group header and select the Change Group... option. This will

open the "Change Group Options" window. You can then choose the customer name field (e.g. Customer.name) from the drop down list of fields to switch it. If needed, select the options tab and set as necessary. When done, choose the OK button to save your change. Don't forget to save your report too when you are done making any other changes desired.

Note: If you are using a version of Crystal other than Crystal 10, then the Change Group Options may need to be accessed differently. ■



# Dear Brenda

Brenda Povlock, Manager, Client Services



## Odyssey

Dear Brenda,

One of our customers ordered castings and returned some of them. I was told not to put them back into inventory, but I need to be able to give a dollar credit to the customer. The last time I tried to do this via the customer invoice module, the castings got returned to inventory and we didn't discover it until 4 weeks later when shipping thought we had some in inventory for a customer and couldn't find them. Boy, did I catch it from the shipping manager. I thought there was a way to do this, but now I'm too scared to try anything because I don't know what I did wrong the last time.

In Hiding from the Shipping Manager

Dear In Hiding,

Let's make sure you understand how to enter a credit versus a return within invoicing so you can come out of hiding. The first choice you must make is whether you have a customer order number to process the credit against or not. If you do, then click the radio button to create an

invoice for Regular Invoice/Credit/Return - With Order (See Fig 1); if you don't, then you

will want to click the radio button called Product Return/Credit - No Order. Once that decision is made, you would process this invoice almost like any other invoice except that for the field called Inv. Type you need to select "Credit" (See Fig 2). An Invoice Type of "Credit" means that you are only giving the customer a dollar credit and will not be affecting inventory quantities. An Invoice Type of "Return" means you will be

giving the customer a dollar credit and returning the quantity to Finished Goods inventory in the system. If you happen to be using the Returns Tracking system, you will want to make sure to only use "Credit" and record the RMA Number because the inventory quantity is affected from within the Returns Tracking system using the receive option. It is also possible that automatic credits are being created. Check with your system administrator to find out how your system is set up.

## BLIS-400

Dear Brenda,

Our employees have always complained about navigating thru the different menus to get to "their" menu. Is there a way in BLIS to set an initial menu for each employee?

Complaint Department

Dear Complaint Department,

You're in luck because in BLIS version 7.0, a new feature was added to allow you to set an initial menu for each employee. It's very simple to use, just go to the security file on menu BLM013 option 1, type in the user id of the employee and press enter. Highlight the first line (or type a plus code of 7) and click the button called "Additional Security." A pop-up window will appear (See Fig 1) where you can type the initial menu for the employee. This can be any menu that exists in your BLIS execution library list that can be executed via the GO command. If there is no menu assigned to an employee, it will default to the BLIS Master Menu. Note: The 2 other items on this screen can give this user authority to Vendors marked secured and authority to an employee Social Security number in the Employee Master as well as on the Employee Inquiry screen.

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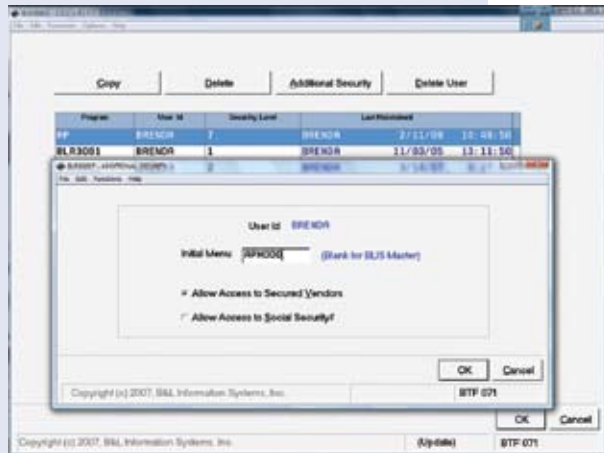
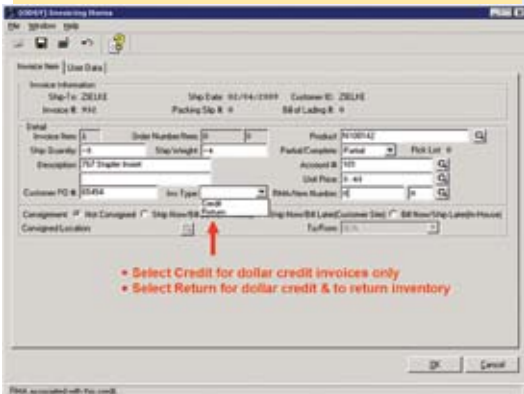
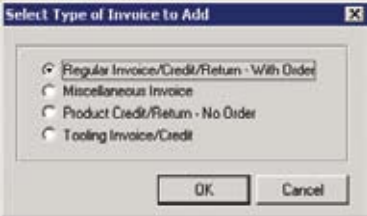
their real-life payback of their B&L software implementation, and robust round-table discussions for maximum idea exchange.

**Spectrum '09**  
**September 27-29, 2009**  
**Chicago, IL**

Our centerpiece customer event of the year provides a huge variety of learning experiences for users of all levels. People from production, quality, accounting, sales and IT will have over 25 sessions to choose from, all yielding significant take-home value that you can implement right away. Additionally, the networking opportunities with other B&L customers is the "hidden jewel" in attending Spectrum.

In these challenging economic times, it is even more critical that we all take advantage of the technology before us (that you have already paid for) to survive, and ultimately thrive when the economy comes back...and it will come back. An effective lumberjack needs to sharpen his/her axe to yield the most production. Come "sharpen your B&L axe" at these two events this year. More details and registration are available on-line at [blinfo.com](http://blinfo.com).

Thanks,  
Phil Laney



**B&L Welcomes**  
**New Client**

**Glidewell Specialties**  
**Foundry Co.**  
**Calera, AL**



# R&D DEVELOPMENTS

Doug Hinman, Manager, R&D

## Technical Considerations for SaaS

There are several technical variations for SaaS (Software as a Service) implementations. One of the IT industry's recommended implementations is known as multi-tenancy. This means all records for all users for all companies accessing a SaaS server reside in the same physical database. The application filters the records based on which company a user belongs to. Multi-tenancy is analogous to renters in an apartment building. The renters share many of the same services and facilities, thus reducing cost for the property owner. All tenants share the same swimming pool, for example. This means several things to end-users of SaaS. It means your data is intermingled with data from other organizations, possibly your competition. If the application is written properly, then your data should be isolated from view from others. But, most utilities inherent to the database management system are not usable because of the intermingling. This design also makes it more difficult to use standard report writers like Crystal Reports. Recovering records from the database is extremely complicated in the multi-tenant design and may not be provided under many

SaaS implementations. And if your company direction changes such that you want to move your data to another SaaS vendor or host the application in-house, you have a real problem trying to extract your data into a transportable format.

Because of the aforementioned negatives, B&L's SaaS implementation will not be the multi-tenancy type. Each SaaS customer will have their own distinct Progress database. That means you can easily bring Odyssey in house as well as have full use of custom Crystal Reports and your own user-defined fields.

There are also technical considerations, many of which are universal regardless of how SaaS is implemented. Since SaaS is delivered over the internet, bandwidth must be managed. Bandwidth is not unlimited so some planning is required for any activity that travels over the pipe. Uploading image files from your local system to the SaaS server is one of those considerations. Image files should first be compressed to reduce their size. We have found that resizing/compressing files used for pictures of castings, etc. does not significantly restrict their usefulness within Odyssey, which is primarily printing on shop documents or displaying on terminals on the shop floor. For example, using PhotoShop we resized a 1 megabyte JPG file from 10" x 14" to about 4" x 5" with a compression factor of 15%. The file was reduced to about 1/20 of the original size (52K) with very little loss of clarity. If you need large pictures with an extreme amount of detail, you will need to strike a balance between picture quality and bandwidth requirements. ■

## Upcoming Events

Event	Date	City,State
113th Metalcasting Congress	April 8-9	Las Vegas, NV Booth 206
AFS - Texas Chapter	April 23-25	Ft. Worth, TX
Crystal Reports Class	May 13-14	Bridgman, MI
B&L Executive Conference	June 1 & 2	New Buffalo & Bridgman, MI

For a schedule of free webinars of Odyssey software, go to [www.blinfo.com](http://www.blinfo.com) and click on Events.

If you are interested in training, please contact Brenda Pavlock at extension 321.

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