

# B & L NEWS

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Enterprise Software for Metalcasters

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## IN THEIR OWN WORDS... Sivyer Steel describing their B&L experience to another foundry.

**G**ood Morning Pat, I trust that you made it back safely. I wanted to again thank you, Matt, and Paul for 1<sup>st</sup> coming to Sivyer and for the great dialogue between your group and mine. If we sounded like assistant salesmen to Jerry (B&L Account Executive) I apologize. I attribute our enthusiasm to the fact that Odyssey does in fact do all of what Jerry and Matt (B&L Sales and Marketing Manager) claim it will do and much more. Some of us, like you, had concerns about moving from our previous system to Odyssey, especially after we finally had that system working well. Jerry came to Sivyer as he did with you and demonstrated Odyssey, showed us the touch screens and the capabilities for pictures, videos etc. All of **the Sivyer staff that attended that demo was impressed with what Jerry had demonstrated**, and some were probably ready to "buy" on the spot.



Ralph Janis  
Sivyer Steel Corp

Frank Johnson, our CFO, and I sat down and discussed all the pro's for purchasing Odyssey, then I made a list of all the con's to not purchase Odyssey. Frank then asked his staff to do the same thing; create a list of pros and con's, and I did the same with my staff. It is safe to say that not all lists were the same, but in the aggregate the pro's outweighed the cons. Then Frank and I took the

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## Forecast: Mostly Cloudy

**T**he business software industry has always been a fast-changing field, but lately it's gone on a real tear. With change comes new concepts and labels that require definition. I'd like to share with you a few concepts and my definitions. Please keep in mind these are my unique, general insights and are not intended to be complete and perfect. My intent is to begin a discussion of the changes facing the business software community.



Phil Laney  
President, B&L

**Cloud Computing:** The concept of utilizing the compute power of the internet, rather than your own computers, to perform a computerized function. As you take the on ramp to the internet from the browser on your PC (either at work or at home), you enter the cloud, where there are countless computing resources (e.g. servers, databases, software, etc.) that could be made available for organizations and individuals to perform tasks.

**On-Demand:** Delivery of content over a high-speed internet connection. Content could be video, audio, television, movie, software apps, whatever. In the early days of the internet, on-demand services were very limited due to slow dial-up connections. As DSL, Wi-Fi, T-1, etc. has become more widely available, on-demand services have moved into the mainstream.

**SaaS:** Software as a Service is the idea of receiving your application software over the internet via a browser. There is no "computer room" at your company, where the network, servers, database, software, etc. are housed. All these are located in the cloud. Because you are not buying software, but rather receiving it as a service, you pay for only what you

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## B&L Welcomes New Clients

Customer	Location	Product
Castalum, Ltd.	Welshpool Powys, UK	Odyssey
Grede Foundries, Inc.	Milwaukee, WI	BLIS-400
Port City Group	Muskegon, MI	Odyssey SaaS

*In Their Own Words, continued from page 1*

time to establish a budget of what the changeover would cost. We knew the cost of the software, the cost for their maintenance, and the cost of licenses. What we had to determine and include was all the rest that was not directly a B&L cost such as additional cabling, upgrade of existing PC's, of course New Server, Backup System for Odyssey, how many touch screens if any? And do we use Touch Screens or just go with PC's which is considerably cheaper. Then the big question – what do we want out of Odyssey first and how long do we spend on training and how do we conduct the training.....all of this we had to consider and plan for before we purchased Odyssey.

After many discussions, we made the deal with B&L in July 08. We purchased our Server and installed Odyssey in August 08. After some discussion with the B&L staff, I set a target GO LIVE date for December 15, 2008. We started training September 1<sup>st</sup> of 2008 and continually had training for at least 3 days out of every week until the deadline of 12/15. Between September 1 and December 15<sup>th</sup> we had the necessary cabling completed, purchased our touch screens and installed them, and made necessary upgrades where needed to users PC's. On December 15<sup>th</sup> we were ready to go.

Sounds easy, but it was a lot of hard work. As I tried to explain, the success or failure will depend on who is in charge of the implementation, how much does that person know of how your shop operates, how much does that person know of all the different aspects of the business, Accounting, Quality, Purchasing, Inventory, Scheduling, Operations, Shipping & Receiving and of course the manufacturing group, how much or how little authority will you give the implementer, and how many people will you allow being on the implementation team?

Now that you have heard and seen all the wonderful things Odyssey claims it can do, and verified by us that it indeed can do it, I must caution you and your staff at your company that although Odyssey will do all that it claims and much more, it will and does require people and time to maintain each module. Odyssey does nothing by itself, no magic buttons, it takes people and time. Has Odyssey made a difference at Sivyer? Absolutely. Was it worth the expense? Yes. Would we do it all over if we could go back in time? Yes.

One last comment...**the B&L experience is by all means Top Shelf....they will always treat you as if you are their only customer, and you can rely on the accuracy and credibility of anyone on their staff.** And no, Jerry did not ask me to say that.

Pat, I hope your trip was worthwhile, and I hope you had most if not all your questions answered. Please feel free to call me with any additional questions you may have as you move closer to making a decision. If I can be of any future service or help to you and your company, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Have a good day and we wish you the best of luck if you do decide to purchase Odyssey. ■

**Ralph Janis**

**Mgr. I.T. & Odyssey Business System**

**Sivyer Steel Corporation**



## R&D DEVELOPMENTS

Doug Hinman, Vice President, R&D

Sometimes I poke around our clients' web sites. It lets me see their "internet face" and how they present themselves to their customers, suppliers, and prospects. I always look for a link that says something like Customer Login. When I find it I click it to see what's behind it. Many times it's Odyssey Intelligent Views (IV). When a BLIS or Odyssey client uses IV on their web site it gives the B&L R&D department a great sense of satisfaction.

I think IV is one of our best products. When we developed it many years ago our objective was actually to display data on small devices like PDAs. Well, the best technical solution for that was to serve up web pages with Odyssey or BLIS data. We already had a great tool in the Data Explorer, which lets you create your own views of data, so we used its output to fill web pages. We ended up with a dynamic data displayer in a web browser where you can get at your data from virtually anything with an internet connection. Clients use IV for many things, including process inquiry with pictures on the shop floor, executive dashboards with graphs and gauges, and all types of ad hoc inquiries.

During the initial development of IV we also added a special layer of security that restricts your business partners to only their data within your database. You tell the intelligent view to select only records from

files that equal the user ID of who is logged in. For example, you set up users in Odyssey for your customers where their user ID is the same as their customer# in the database. So, any customer logging in will be restricted to just the orders, open A/R, etc. for them. This is how our clients have created web portals for their customers to give them up-to-the-minute order status, and anything else stored in BLIS or Odyssey that is important to them. Note that this concept works for suppliers as well.

I mentioned in my Spectrum speech in September that we are researching new browser interfaces for improved appearance and ease-of-use. IV currently allows customizing its look and feel by modifying our standard style sheet. This has had limited use so far, however. The web page served up by IV is a prime candidate for us to improve. There is so much more we can do to take IV to the next level. Not just its appearance, but also new features and power. I am not making promises about future releases, but applying our web interface research to IV is a natural first step. Stay tuned. ■

Forecast: Mostly Cloudy, continued from page 1



# Dear Brenda

Brenda Povlock  
Manager, Client Services



## Odyssey

Dear Brenda,

We have made a lot of changes to different screens using screen designer to take off the delete key in order to keep people from deleting records, but with every release upgrade we end up having to review each of those screens. Is there any other way to keep a user from deleting records other than removing the delete button?

Delete Happy

Dear Delete Happy,

With 4.1 came a new enhancement that should help with both! You can now specify in security whether or not users have the ability to delete records from any Odyssey screen. The 3 options are "All," which gives the user access to delete all records; "Children," which gives the user access to only delete children records of the screen (for instance a contact could be deleted out of a customer, but the customer master could not be deleted); the last option is "None," which doesn't give the user the option to delete at all for the screen. To update existing secured screens, you can update the delete options at the bottom of the screen (see the security screen example). The delete button will now be grayed out for the user where they do not have access to the button (see customer screen example).

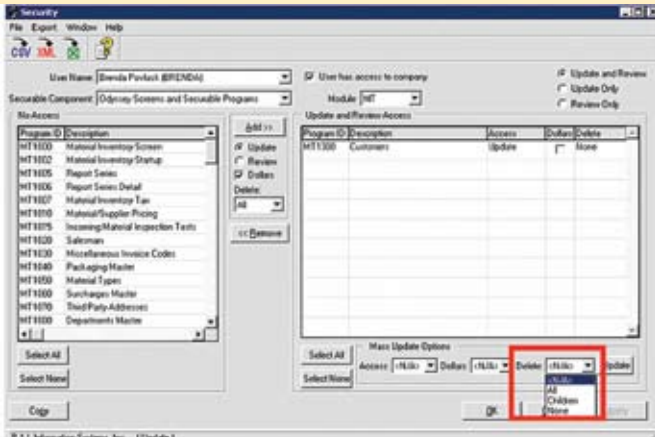


Figure 1

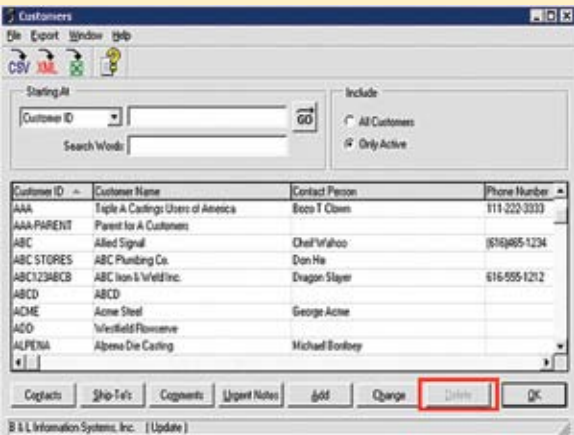


Figure 2

use and how much you use it...similar to your electric or gas bill.

**Browser-based, zero-client:** Essentially this means there is no software on your PC, everything is delivered through your browser. Traditional client-server based-software divided up the application so that the user interface portion was on the client or PC (as with traditional Odyssey deployment). The business logic and database was hosted on the server in the network. A zero client SaaS solution has all the application in the cloud at the SaaS hosting facilities. There is some debate in the industry whether true, absolute zero client is possible for an enterprise application, as there are drivers, cookies and other minor software required on the client to effectively deliver a comprehensive business software solution. Another example of everyone having their own definition.

You'll be hearing more and more about these concepts this year, not only from B&L, but from your other technology partners. We all like clear, sunny skies; however, being in the cloud(s) can be a good thing, technology-wise. Please e-mail your thoughts to me at [planey@blinfo.com](mailto:planey@blinfo.com).

## BLIS

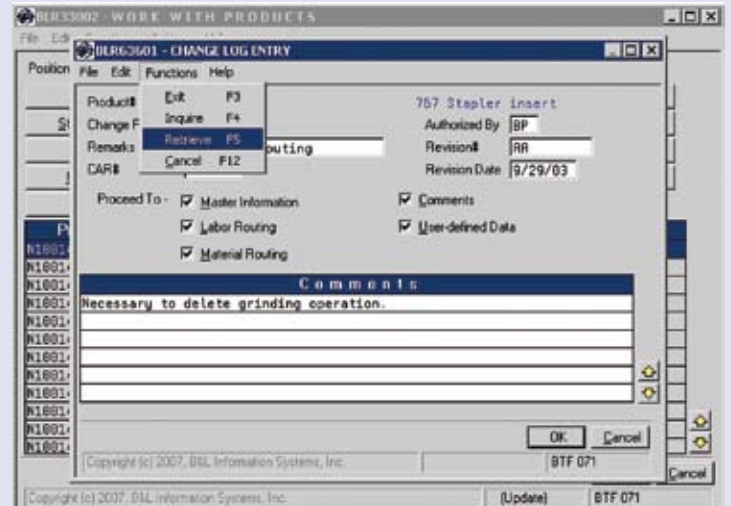
Dear Brenda,

We have change log turned on for the Product Master and Material Inventory Master, and there are times when I have to go in and make the same change to 20 or 30 different products and/or materials. I end up having to re-type the same information for every different product or material. Is there a way to set up a dup key like we used to have on dumb terminals (yes, I'm old) so that I could just touch a key and have my comments automatically come in?

Carbon Copy Needed

Dear Carbon Copy,

I hate to admit this, but I actually know what you're talking about. There is a little known feature in BLIS that can help. An F5 key exists that retrieves the last logging info that you keyed in, but you can't use it until after you enter the first Log & Change record. For example, click the Log & Change button or type plus code 22 in front of the 1st product you need to change, enter your information as you normally would, then when you bring up the log and change screen for the next product, press F5 or click F5 from the Function menu. The system will bring in the last information entered (change reason, authorized by, remarks and comments), then you can just click the screens you want to go to and you're quickly on your way to finishing the job faster!



# SPECTRUM



**Spectrum '09**, held at the Westin Chicago River North hotel on Sept. 27-29, 2009, was a huge success. Spectrum is B&L's annual User's Conference; attendees experienced two session-packed days full of educational sessions, networking sessions, panel discussions, roundtable discussions, and much more. The Monday evening Murder Mystery Dinner was very entertaining.



Spectrum '09 set the bar high for future conferences, but we know we can do it! With that said, we are extremely excited to announce that Spectrum '10 will be held on October 3-5, 2010, at The Brown

Hotel, a prestigious, award-winning historic hotel located in



the heart of downtown Louisville, Kentucky.

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend what is certain to be another fantastic user group conference! ■



## Upcoming Events

Event	Date	City,State
CastExpo '10	March 20-23	Orlando, FL

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

**TRAINING** - There are recorded training videos available on-line at no charge to customers. For access to these videos, go to [www.blinfo.com/Customers/htm](http://www.blinfo.com/Customers/htm). Contact [support@blinfo.com](mailto:support@blinfo.com) for your password. For any other training needs, contact Brenda Povlock at ext. 321.

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