B&L NEWS

Information Systems

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FROM THE DESK OF Doug Hinman
Senior Vice-President – Research & Development

The shape of the future is a web

The Web User Interface is generally available with Release 5.0 of Odyssey, planned for Q1, 2016. The R&D project to build the Web UI has taken several years of hard work with the result being a browser-based, zero-client UI. It includes basically the same functions as the Windows UI. That has always been our primary goal for its initial release. There are a few differences between the two user interfaces, but they are minor enough that the two can run side-by-side for your everyday Odyssey activities. It is important to note that the Web UI is much more robust in the personalization area, however.

So, what's next? As more customers use the Web UI we'll surely encounter important areas that need to improve in Release 5.1 (possibly even a bug or two). We will also enhance both the Windows UI and Web UI based on the Odyssey Feedback forum on our web site. These requests will be business functions as well as user interface improvements. **We see 2016 as an opportunity to get more direct feedback on the Web UI.** R&D will spend time internally with B&L's consultants, trainers, and support staff to hear what they encounter implementing, training on, and supporting the Web UI. Even more importantly, we want to meet with *you* and your end users. We can watch how they use the system and get suggestions for improvement. We are aware that each of our customers do things differently. This is especially true for high production vs. jobbing, small vs. large castings, various metal types, tier 1 or not, etc. It's something we are always aware of and the R&D Department tries to design Odyssey to hit the happy medium or be configurable.

As an example, we have discussed a change internally that seems like a simple thing, but really needs more customer input. It wouldn't take R&D very long to make

the change but we don't want to just go ahead because it can add more confusion by allowing multiple ways of doing a function. The Print action on the Shipping screen lets you select multiple packing slips to print the packing slip form, bill of lading, labels, and cert. Likewise the Post action means you can update inventory and create the invoice for multiple packing slips at once. One of B&L's

project consultants suggested adding (not moving) the Print and Post action buttons to the Change Packing Slip screen because he has worked with customers who work with one packing slip at a time. They enter it, update it, print and then post. This can seem minor but it's the kind of improvement we plan to investigate, especially for high-use areas like shipping, invoicing, A/P, cash receipts, purchasing, scheduling, production reporting, etc.

I'm sure we'll get more feedback than we can handle; so the suggestions we implement will come down to priorities, as usual. But after the thousands of hours creating the Web UI, we in R&D are looking forward to making these kinds of improvements to the new Odyssey interface.

Continuous Improvement

Odyssey 4.7 MR 4 is now available. (This general availability release encompasses both the Windows User Interface (UI) and Web UI.) The R&D department at B&L codes each Odyssey update based on customer feedback received via the Customer Feedback Forum, direct customer interaction, and satisfaction surveys.

A sampling of Odyssey 4.7 MR4 enhancements:

- Material Inventory Item - Stop Code Notifier

- Access Shop Orders from Product/Core Master

- Production Interface - Production Entry Plugin (Web UI only)

- Button Designer (Web UI only)

The full version of Odyssey's Web UI is available as a limited release beta; the Web UI version of the Shop Floor Manager module is available for all users. This zero-client ERP technology eliminates the need for metalcasting manufacturers to use specialty devices and 3rd party software interfaces to get the most out of their ERP. The Odyssey's Web UI Shop Floor Manager may be used with any browser-based device, including laptops and tablets; supported browsers include Internet Explorer, FireFox, or Chrome.

Odyssey users can update from any version of Odyssey to Odyssey 4.7. Any assistance needed in the update process is free for any client on maintenance with B&L.

Odyssey Customer Signings

▶ Signed as a B&L customer in the second quarter of 2015, **Alumco** of Ontario is B&L's first new Canadian customer of 2015 and B&L's ninth implementation "kick-off" meeting of 2015. Founded in 1987, Alumco is a family-owned, ISO 9001:2000 certified foundry specializing in commercial, industrial and military aluminum castings.

▶ **Spuncast** of Watertown, Wisconsin will begin kick-off planning on use of the Odyssey ERP system this month. Spuncast is known for their stainless steel centrifugal castings, heat treating, metallurgical testing and CNC machining and will be using Odyssey's Shop Floor Manager.

▶ Established in 1984, **St. Marys Foundry, Inc.** is making a move to modern ERP with Odyssey. St. Marys Foundry produces iron castings from 500 lbs. to 60,000 lbs. for a wide variety of industries. A critical factor in St. Marys' ERP selection process was Odyssey's ability to import historical data from their Alpha Four database

for immediate use within Odyssey's applications.

▶ During the years family-owned **Rochester Metal Products** of Rochester, Indiana has been a customer of B&L's legacy BLIS software product, they have made innumerable improvements and upgrades to their metalcasting business. The latest upgrade for this specialist in gray and ductile iron castings is in the realm of real-time data as they convert to Odyssey SaaS ERP software.

▶ Also updating from BLIS to Odyssey ERP software, **Twin City Die Casting** will kick-off their large-scale conversion project in mid-October for all 3 plants: Minneapolis, Minnesota; Monticello, Minnesota; and Watertown, South Dakota. A full service provider of precision aluminum and magnesium die castings, Twin City will be integrating company-wide inventory management into Odyssey.

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FROM THE DESK OF Joe Harmon
Vice-President - Technology & Client Support

This year has been an exciting year for the Technology and Support Team. Our Support Team won a Silver Stevie Award for outstanding customer service. Stevie Award judges include many of the world's most respected executives, entrepreneurs, innovators, and business educators. Each award program harnesses the insights and talents of more than 200 judges every year.

Our Rapid Support system continues to grow as we add documents daily. This system allows instant access to FAQs by our clients and includes application and technical documents.

The Technology team has been working diligently upgrading our cloud and traditional clients to the latest version of Odyssey, which also required upgrading the Progress Software back-end database.

We have had 11 clients join the B&L Cloud this year. We are also seeing traditional/on-premise clients expressing an interest in moving to the B&L Cloud.

As more and more clients move to B&L's Cloud, we want to ensure you that our hardware is ready to handle your cloud ERP needs. We are in the process of upgrading B&L's cloud hosting hardware in order to give our customers the best experience possible. Here are some of the upgrades happening:

- Adding an additional Dell PowerEdge Server with Intel Xeon Dual 10-Core 256GB Memory
- Adding a dedicated Dell PowerEdge Server to handle database backups separately from the production servers
- Upgrading Two New Switches to Dell GbE Layer 3 Switch with 10GbE Uplinks
- Adding Two New Fiber Channel Switches (Brocade 300 Series)
- Adding a new Solid State Drive (SSD) Fiber Channel Storage Area Network (SAN)

What do all these changes mean? It means that B&L is investing in our hardware infrastructure in order to have a system that is ready and responsive to the demands of our customers.

All of this hardware and redundancy leads to B&L's record of uptime. In the last year, the lowest quarterly uptime on the B&L Cloud has been 99.89% uptime. Additionally, B&L has processes in place to give you peace of mind on your data:

- Local Database backups every 6 hours
- Midnight Database Backups get sent offsite for Disaster Recovery purposes.

If you have any questions about the B&L Cloud, please contact me at **JHarmon@BLInfo.com.**

In a traditional or on-premise installation the client is responsible for pretty much everything: hardware, storage management, backup management, disaster recovery, software upgrades, and server upgrades.

For a SaaS (cloud) installation, B&L handles: the server hardware, storage, backups, disaster recovery, software upgrades and server upgrades. The only thing the client is responsible for is the client hardware device and the internet service in order to connect to the B&L Cloud.

What is the Cloud?

- The cloud is **the Internet**
- It's all the things you can **access remotely** over the internet
- When something is **in the cloud** it means it is stored on **servers** on the internet instead of on your computer

Jennifer Dickson Joins Customer Support Desk

Hired in May of 2015, Jennifer has been training on the Odyssey ERP system with B&L's Customer Support Desk staff and Professional Services Department for the last few months. Prior to joining B&L, Jennifer experienced the benefits of ERP as well as gained proficiency with the principles of LEAN manufacturing and EDI technology working in the front offices of several Michigan manufacturers. She has also worked extensively in the customer service sector and finance industry. Jennifer attended Southwestern Michigan College and is a Notary Public.

Classes

You will learn the Odyssey way to create product and core routings, bills of materials, and cross-referencing. Production basics also includes the principles of production screen designs, production transactions and tracking inventory. You will see hands-on demonstrations of creating shop orders and capacities, as well as a light overview of scheduling basics. This two day class will also touch on floor manager screens, quality viewer, and production reports.

- **Intro to Manufacturing & Inventory Application – Windows UI Version (October 20th-21st)**
- **Intro to Manufacturing & Inventory Applications - Web UI Version (November 3rd-4th)**

From Job Costs to On-Time Delivery to Shipping Documents, you need information to ensure your metal casting organization is running smoothly. During this day and a half class, you will: 1) create basic reports using data from Odyssey; 2) modifying existing Odyssey reports to create new Odyssey reports; and 3) navigate and understand the Odyssey database structure.

- **Crystal Reports Class (November 10th – 11th)**

Follow your data from "Quote to Cash" and "Requisition to Pay" in this hands-on kick-starter to key Odyssey modules. Over the course of two days, experienced trainers will be demonstrating methods used to enter data and assisting students with company specific questions, as well as providing a high-level overview of the integration of the entire Odyssey software system.

- **Odyssey Boot Camp (November 12th – 13th)**

B&L's premier customer education event, Spectrum, is held every fall at a new location in North America. During this 2-day conference B&L's expert staff leads classes on a variety of Odyssey and related software topics.

Spectrum Highlight - Attendees meet and learn with other Odyssey users on how they use ERP software and their processes. Past attendees note this industry-specific "networking" for metalcasters who use Odyssey is one of the best features of the conference!

- **Spectrum 2016 (Fall 2016)**

By 2020, Gartner predicts that more than three-quarters of organizations will be using advanced analytics to improve business decision-making as they shift focus from measurement to analysis, forecasting and optimization. (*Source: Gartner's Forecast Analysis: Enterprise Application Software, Worldwide, 2Q15 Update*)

Registration and class details at **BLInfo.com/Events**