

VAI and IBM: smarter enterprise management with mobile and social business

A personalized, web-based user experience that helps manufacturing, distribution and retail organizations remotely access VAI S2K ERP solutions to improve decision making and collaboration



Highlights:

- Enables access to ERP applications and data through a customizable web-based interface
 - Allows knowledge workers to tailor the experience to the needs of their particular role
 - Adapts the presentation of data to different mobile devices using responsive design
 - Integrates ERP applications with email, calendars and other web-based applications
 - Sets the stage for social collaboration with task creation, alerts and instant messaging
 - Works with a powerful array of software and world-class computing resources from IBM
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Mobile technology is redefining how decision makers in manufacturing, distribution and retail approach daily workflow. Previously, companies relied on a standard client-server architecture to run critical enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. But with the rise of mobile devices and the web-based applications they run, the limits of this architecture are becoming apparent.

Users can't easily access the up-to-the-minute information they need if they are traveling or working remotely. Even if the ERP system is accessible, the experience is not customizable, which means it takes much more time for users to find what they need. And the ERP interface does not integrate with email, calendars, social media, collaboration tools or any other web-based applications, which means it takes longer for users to act on information.

VAI and IBM offer a more flexible solution. Relying on a combination of VAI software and powerful IBM technology, the solution allows organizations to move ERP to the cloud and provide a configurable web experience that helps users access ERP data through virtually any connected device, in a simple and highly secure way.

Solution Overview

Manufacturers, distributors, retailers and other midmarket organizations need every advantage when it comes to raising productivity and delivering the highest levels of customer service. One of the biggest advantages is employees having access to the right information at the right time, no matter where they are.

Powered by IBM technologies, the S2K Smart Center from VAI brings this capability to life. It provides intuitive and immediate access to the tools and information decision makers need to do their jobs — all within a single browser session.



It supports single sign-on, common navigation and a uniform look and feel across all of the modules in the S2K Enterprise ERP family from VAI. That means users can tap into accurate ERP data for work order processing, material requirements planning, shop floor control, product quality, capacity requirements planning, finite scheduling, accounting and more. And they can do this from virtually any mobile device with a browser, whether a laptop, tablet or smart phone.

With VAI S2K Smart Center, the user experience can easily be customized to a knowledge worker's needs. Users can tailor what the VAI S2K Smart Center displays, creating a specialized configuration of the exact applications, information and dashboards that are important to just about any role — from management to sales to executives. Role-based experiences enable users to improve productivity, make more informed decisions faster and react more quickly to change.

This customization stays intact regardless of how knowledge workers experience it. The VAI S2K Smart Center is built on standards-based technologies, including HTML5 and AJAX, which means web applications can run on virtually any platform that uses a modern web browser — without the need for special translations, conversions or reprogramming. Responsive design helps ensure that the VAI S2K Smart Center automatically resizes itself for different devices, so users always enjoy an experience that matches their device of choice.

Using powerful software from IBM, the VAI S2K Smart Center sets the stage for enhanced enterprise collaboration. It features a company-wide notification system that allows every user to monitor daily tasks and business alerts. From within an application — including ERP modules as well as email and calendar tools — users can create a task and assign it to an employee.

When employees sign into the VAI S2K Smart Center home screen, they see all the daily tasks that others have assigned for them, as well as those they created for themselves. In addition, the home screen shows workflow alerts, which flag issues that need immediate attention. From this single comprehensive screen, users can collaborate with one another around specific tasks. To this end, VAI S2K Smart Center includes instant messaging (IM) and the ability for users to synchronize their email contacts, calendar events and email. And because VAI S2K Smart Center is web-based, it can integrate easily with other web-based applications, including social media networks.

Web-based design also sets the stage for a wholly cloud-based solution. More and more knowledge workers are adopting mobile devices as part of their daily workflow, which makes it even more important for them to be able to access and interact with ERP applications remotely. Cloud-based architectures, where applications and data are hosted in the cloud, provide a proven approach that simplifies the entire IT infrastructure and makes it easier for more employees to access them from more places.

VAI S2K Smart Center can be deployed in several ways, including in the cloud. With an on-premise implementation, organizations run VAI S2K Enterprise software in-house on powerful IBM servers. Platform as a service (PaaS) allows organizations to acquire ERP applications and host them in the cloud within a VAI data center.

Solution Benefits

Together, VAI and IBM help manufacturers, distributors, retailers and others make better decisions and act faster in complex markets. These capabilities deliver powerful advantages:

- **Higher productivity** — The ability to find the right information in an ERP module, combined with the built-in workflow tools of VAI S2K Smart Center, has the potential to raise productivity significantly. Employees can avoid the clutter and overload of more expensive ERP applications and instead focus on the data they need to make decisions and move work forward. They can attend to important tasks first, knowing the work they need to do is in front of them.
- **Easier access** — Mobility is greatly increased with VAI S2K Smart Center. Whether employees are traveling, at a client meeting, at an off-site event or walking the floor, they can find the information they need from a mobile device. And the experience remains both customized for their personal preferences and the device they are using.
- **Social collaboration** — The web-based design of VAI S2K Smart Center bridges the gap between conventional ERP tools and web-based applications. This creates new opportunities for employees to collaborate in real time. Colleagues can be brought in to answer questions more quickly via IM. Meetings can be planned more quickly and coordinated with each stakeholder's calendar. Complex tasks can be divided and delegated with exceptional efficiency.

VAI and IBM: a closer look

IBM components of the solution may include all of the following:

- **IBM SmartCloud® for Social Business collaboration services** — These services provide integrated email, social business capabilities and third-party applications, all delivered via cloud computing. A cost-effective social business platform built upon IBM expertise in delivering security-rich services can help organizations become social businesses, as well as help reduce IT costs and complexity.
- **IBM PureFlex™ System** — The PureFlex System combines compute, storage, networking, virtualization and management into a single infrastructure system that is expert at sensing and anticipating resource needs. It includes integrated patterns of expertise designed to automate and enhance the deployment and maintenance of workloads, supporting 66 percent faster management setup time.
- **IBM System x® servers** — These enterprise servers represent the best of IBM X-Architecture® technology. In this solution, System x servers are equipped with processors from the Intel® Xeon® processor E7 family. These processors combine exceptional raw compute power with increased memory bandwidth and support for significantly greater memory capacity to deliver superior performance compared to the previous generation of processors.
- **IBM Power Systems™ servers** — Power Systems servers enable application choice, enterprise integration, IT efficiency, and data availability and security, so organizations can achieve outstanding performance. They enable intelligent, dynamic resource allocation and rapid response to changes in application and workload requirements, and are specifically designed for big data and compute-intensive applications.
- **IBM WebSphere® Application Server software** — This software speeds the delivery of applications and services, enabling businesses to operate efficiently and reliably while helping ensure security and control. It reduces costs and downtime by consolidating workloads, infrastructure and administrative tasks with enhanced web server load balancing and failover.
- **IBM WebSphere Portal family** — This family of products provides enterprise web portals that help companies deliver a highly personalized social experience for customers. WebSphere Portal products give users a single point of access to the applications, services, information and social connections they need.
- **IBM Sametime® software** — Sametime software is a leading real-time engagement engine with simple high-definition audio and video conferencing. The software enables users to access all social communications from a single place, whether that place is an inbox, desktop productivity tool, enterprise social network, mobile device, portal or web application.

VAI and IBM Solution Architecture



The solution from VAI and IBM establishes a new standard for efficient decision making, collaboration and workflow in midmarket manufacturing, distribution and retail organizations.

VAI and IBM: mobile collaboration

VAI

Widely recognized as an industry leader, VAI is a trusted IBM partner, providing cutting-edge technology proven to streamline and optimize business capabilities. VAI's technology roadmap, a shared vision with IBM, provides companies with a business model, based on best industry processes, that leverages technology to create value and improve performance. The VAI S2K family of products includes solutions for distribution, manufacturing, retail, food and service companies.

IBM

Through hardware, software and service offerings, IBM provides a rich portfolio of solutions to help manufacturers streamline production, operate more efficiently, improve planning and scheduling and implement more fine-grained and flexible decision-making processes. As the leader in optimization and technology, IBM helps manufacturers make the most of ERP and supply chain applications by extending analytic capabilities, making better decisions, improving order management and purchasing, plus many other capabilities.

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