

VAI—RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ERP & LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

How is Vormittag Associates Inc. (VAI) developing its ERP software to meet the needs of the new workforce and other changes in our dynamic market? TEC principal ERP analyst PJ Jakovljevic looks at how the vendor is expanding its ERP offerings to better meet the needs of manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and services companies.

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While the market observers' obsession and interest about the largest and/or fastest-growing enterprise software vendors is logical, there are always honorable cases of gritty enterprise resource planning (ERP) vendors with their focus and defensible niches. One such example is VAI (standing for Vormittag Associates Inc.), which is a long-standing (since 1978) and independently owned mid-market provider of ERP software solutions for the distribution, manufacturing, retail, and service sectors.

Even these days of the layoff news in the information technology (IT) industry VAI continues to hire at an aggressive pace and has also promoted several employees throughout the last year. The plans for the new workforce, whether remote, onsite, or hybrid, will include an expansion in the development, testing,

implementation, and training units.

VAI Background

VAI started as a regional IBM Business Partner and ERP software developer for small to midsize companies in the New York area, given its headquarters in Ronkonkoma, New York. The company expanded over the decades by marketing its enhanced products and services elsewhere through its direct sales force and reseller channel. VAI has several offices in the United States, but it also maintains a domestic and international presence through resellers, especially in the regions where it does not sell directly.

With specific ERP solutions for companies in the hard goods, food, and pharmaceutical industries, VAI currently has over 1,500 companies using various versions of its flagship S2K Enterprise suite. VAI customers

come from many industries, from discrete to process manufacturing, retail point-of-sale (POS) to distribution, including automotive, pet supply, medical, plastics, industrial, janitorial distribution, HVAC, plumbing and heating, and more.

In its very early days, VAI focused on customer service, inventory management, and financial applications. Other technologies have since emerged such as electronic data interchange (EDI), wireless scanning and barcoding in the warehouse, and shop floor control, which have resulted in additional e-commerce, mobile technology, and retail POS capabilities. Following those, other major advancements were developed in warehouse management, including RFID, voice picking, and automated putaway.

Today, VAI's cloud-based ERP product lines, S2K Enterprise, S2K Food, and S2K Pharma, all include financial, distribution, manufacturing, and retail applications as well as cross-industry solutions such as warehouse management, analytics, sales force automation (SFA), marketing automation, procurement, e-commerce, field service, pricing and promotions, etc. The suites also feature numerous mobile apps, predictive analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), business intelligence (BI) dashboards (S2K Analytics), and more technology.

VAI's S2K Smart Center is a role-based, customizable, user environment. The users see things relevant to them all on one page without having to go look for it or run reports.

Enter VAI Cloud

In 2009 VAI transformed its business by building a cloud infrastructure with IBM. Now VAI customers can focus more on their business and less on IT infrastructure. Plus, they have peace of mind with included High Availability and Disaster Recovery, with 100% uptime and scalability.

VAI Cloud, LLC is the primary provider for cloud deployment

of VAI's S2K Software Suite. VAI Cloud infrastructure spans multiple data centers with full synchronization between the redundant systems. Customers in VAI Cloud can add more resources, when needed, and the updates can be done without the need for downtime. VAI Cloud can then free up critical IT resources to focus on strategic initiatives and innovation, rather than hardware management.

VAI also offers its customers the ability to access application programming interfaces (APIs) for different plug-in partner applications to meet their distinct business needs. Some of VAI's most sought-after partners include Avalara, Inc., Carbonite, Cleo Integration Cloud (CIC), CYBRA Corporation, FreedomPay, HelpSystems, IBM, Infocon Systems, Mountain Leverage, New Generation Software (NGS), Nylas, Pharma Solutions, ProcessWeaver/Elemica, Varsity Logistics, and Vertex, Inc.

Many of these partners were showcased in the Partner Solution Center at the recent 26th annual customer conference, VAI Connect 2022. The one-day virtual setting connected the S2K ERP customers with VAI's team experts and solution partners. The partners

met virtually with the conference attendees to demonstrate their solutions as well as discuss and review how these innovative products work in conjunction with the S2K ERP software suite.

The conference also outlined new functionality for VAI S2K Enterprise Release 6.2/6.3 and S2K Food Release 6.2 as well as what's ahead with VAI's Technology Roadmap. The company is currently planning an in-person customer conference this September in Orlando.

VAI Execs Peek Into 2023

In conclusion of this article, two VAI executives offered their assessment on how ERP software will evolve with the needs of businesses in 2023. Our collocutors were Joe Scioscia, VP of Sales, and Kevin Beasley, CIO, both long-tenured VAI members.

Scioscia predicts the following:

- Continued Shift to ERP in the Cloud: Companies will continue to move from older on-premises ERP systems to running ERP in the cloud. Many companies that have on-premises ERP are facing potential end-of-life software, difficulties finding IT staff, remote employees needing access to systems, and inadequate defenses against ever-evolving security threats, especially ransomware attacks.



- Mobile Access Will be Critical to Success: Mobile tools are becoming critical for businesses and provide streamlined and real-time capture of data straight from the source—for example, sales reps can place orders immediately and directly from their mobile device when meeting with a customer, and customers can place orders immediately while they are checking inventory, at any time (see figure below). Companies need this accurate and timely flow of data to make smarter, better-informed business decisions. The offline capability of mobile enterprise solutions (with data and processes syncing/replication as soon as the user is back in the Wi-Fi or cellular range) will continue to be increasingly demanded as well.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Will

continue to Evolve: AI is not yet accessible enough for the average business employee and will continue to evolve. Today, embedded analytics helps users gain some insight, but full access to AI can be complex and almost ready for prime time. The next generation of intelligent ERP systems must be accessible to the average user. Now and in the future, ERP vendors will continue to evolve their solutions to incorporate AI to help companies streamline business processes and achieve new levels of efficiency.

For his part, Beasley believes that the most important tech story by far in 2022 must be cybersecurity. It's no longer just covered in tech media; the major media is covering this topic

almost daily. This is impacting everything from governments and large corporations to very small businesses and individuals and can range from something as severe as ransomware attacks down to daily phishing attempts.

Cybersecurity will continue to be one of the biggest and most severe disruptors for businesses, governments, and institutions of all types across the globe. In 2023, we will continue to see many instances of ensuring secure operations utilizing advanced AI to detect the ever-changing malware landscape. Ongoing advancements in tightly securing clouds are also going to continue cloud adoption.

