

B & L NEWS

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Enterprise Software for Metalcasters

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Spectrum '12

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So You Say You Want to Schedule...

an encore article by Frank Roorda
B&L Business Consultant

I run into clients who tell me they want to schedule using B&L's Odyssey or BLIS-400 package, but they have one big problem - they have no idea what their performance rates are for a majority of their operations, nor do they have the time to find out. Does this sound familiar? If it does, then read on; if not, then I understand that the "Dear Brenda" column might have an answer to some other unresolved problem you have.

What is scheduling?

Some tell me that it is an art; others tell me it's a science. As nearly as I can figure out, it is closer to walking a tight rope over Niagara Falls, with water to the right and rocks to the left. Scheduling in B&L involves managing the balance between load and capacity. The capacity part is fairly easy. In the beginning of your respective implementations, you created operations (those operations represent the individual machines or work activities all throughout your plant), then you created capacity in each of those operations. Capacity is simply defined as the amount of time that the operation is available for that day. We encourage clients to take uptime into consideration when they are creating their capacity by operations. This is often called "Practical Capacity." For example, a machine might be available eight hours per shift, but when you net out the downtime, or employee breaks, how available is that machine? After the capacity is created for each machine, then a shop calendar is created. The calendar represents the days available for working within the plant. Netting out the holidays, weekends, or planned shutdowns, what remains is the available working days. A routine is then run to allocate available capacity by operation to the shop calendar.

The other side of the equation is called the load. Load is created when shop orders are entered into the system. This works by multiplying the performance rate of a given operation by the number of pieces scheduled at that operation. The result is how long it will take to perform each operation in the shop order. When all operations are taken cumulatively, we then arrive at either a shop order starting date or end date, depending on whether we used the forward or reverse scheduling technique.

Why this falls down for some clients?

As I mentioned in the opening paragraph, it is not always possible to get performance rates for every operation, and in some cases all the client really knows is lead time through the plant. Does that mean you can't still use the B&L scheduling to arrive at a beginning or ending date for the shop orders? The answer to this question is, of course, "no."

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Bright future at B&L...

We've been very busy here at B&L, as indicated by the following data for fiscal year 2011 (year over year):

- ✓ Total revenue up 17%
- ✓ Total employment up 25%
- ✓ SaaS revenue up 84%
- ✓ 11 new Odyssey customers

B&L also received an award from the Cornerstone Alliance (Benton Harbor, MI), the local chamber of commerce in southwest Michigan, for increased sales and job growth in the local economy.

While we are celebrating this success, we are not resting on our laurels. We've made improvements in virtually every department at the company to better serve and support our growing customer base. The Professional Services department has revamped the project management methods by which we implement software at client locations. The Support Desk has increased capacity by 25% and expanded the use of technology in serving customers. R&D is working on new and exciting products to be rolled out over the next couple years. The newly formed Technology Department has implemented significant improvements at our cloud-based, SaaS co-location facility, including expanded capacity and failover capabilities. The Administration department is working on stream-lining the order entry and billing process. And finally the Business Development group has introduced a Territory Manager approach to better serve customers. It's all about making it easy and pleasurable to work with B&L. Stay tuned, the best is yet to come. And, as always, thank you for your business. 



Phil Laney
President
& CEO

B&L Welcomes New Clients

Crown Casting Inc.
Hodges, SC – foundry
Odyssey

Century Pacific Foundry, Ltd.
Surrey, BC – foundry
Odyssey

Gartland
Foundry Co., Inc.
Terre Haute, IN - foundry
Odyssey

Tek-Cast Inc.
Bensenville, IL – die caster
Odyssey

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Queue Methods


Even if you have no rates for operations or even limited rates, let's say just molding/casting rates and nothing else, you can still utilize scheduling using something that we call Overlap Method. In the screen shot to the right, you will see the scheduling tab from within the Odyssey Labor Routing detail screen.

For those operations where it is not possible to assign a real performance rate, consider using Sequence Overlapping. Sequence Overlapping, or Queue Method as it is known in BLIS, allows you to assign a number of days or hours in between operations. Also in this example (Figure 1), the system will assign a 10-day lead time between the computed end of the operation that came before it and the start of operation 300100. This technique could be used wherever real rates are not known by operation, but a general idea of how long it takes to move through the plant for each step is known. This is especially useful for outside operations. Just as I

had described earlier, the system will accumulate all of the queue times to figure our shop order beginning or end dates.

To Summarize

Those who do know your performance rates by operation, that's great, you are able to do detailed management of load and capacity by operations and use our scheduling module the way we intended. For those who only know some, or none of that information, perhaps queue times are the way to go for now.

As always, I hope this has given you useful information, and if you have any questions about how to implement this solution, please do not hesitate to contact us. 

On The Horizon


Joe Harmon
Vice President — Technology



One of the "big" announcements at Spectrum '11 for the Technology Department was that on January 1, 2012, all B&L Cloud hosted customers were going

to receive PROGRESS Replication+ as part of their service. This meant their data would be replicated to a secondary server real-time and automatically. Well, this was not implemented. However, what was implemented is even better.

We decided not to put in replication but instead go with a complete server "high-availability" system. This high-availability system not only replicates the data but also replicates the operating system, system state, application, and anything else that may be installed on the server. This means that in a crisis, not only is your data safe and replicated but a stand-by server is also ready to power up with all the most recent changes made to the primary server. As you can see, we are not only investing time and money into our Software as a Service offering, but also investing into the network infrastructure to provide a safer, more reliable system.

You can expect us to be doing two (2) failover tests per year to ensure that systems are operating as expected. Do not worry though, these tests will be performed in a non-intrusive manner so as to not disrupt your business. 



R&D DEVELOPMENTS


Doug Hinman
Vice President — Research & Development

By now you know we are in the midst of a large R&D project to create a completely new user interface for Odyssey. If you attended Spectrum 2011 you got to see some details of the project. It's about keeping Odyssey modern and using any web browser anywhere for a zero-client deployment. There are many exciting features being built-in, with an emphasis on personalization. We are striving to make all screens user designable. Current Odyssey has the Screen Designer feature, but its application is not across the board (there are around 100 or so designable screens currently). Not every screen in the new Web UI will be designable, but the vast majority will be.

Another level of personalization we're working on is the ability to create multiple screen designs and column settings per individual screen. You may be familiar with this concept of creating several profiles in Odyssey currently (like the Heat Planner). This lets you have your own views of the same screen – inquiries, maintenance, etc. – for multiple purposes. Take the Product Inquiry screen for example. You'll be able to save a profile that selects (filters) records for certain product classes, such as industrial parts, and show columns important to those parts. You'll be able to save another profile (and name it) that selects other product classes, such as automotive

parts, shows different columns, and sorts the records differently, too. So, when you take the Product Inquiry menu option you will easily be able to select the profile, and the screen will change to that view of the data. Think about this concept for other screens. You could have separate profiles for Purchase Orders for raw materials versus outside services, for example.

While the new Web UI is a long-term project that we're putting considerable effort into, we are still enhancing base Odyssey. Release 4.5 is currently in process and here are just a couple examples of enhancements coming:

1. Accrued Surcharges will let you specify by Customer whether surcharges (metal and energy) are billed on the same invoice as castings or billed separately (accrued). If accrued, you'll be able to see the surcharges caused by the original casting invoices and then create separate invoices for all those charges for the month or other time period.
2. Mass Routing Changes will allow you to update product labor routings and bill of materials en masse. You'll be able to do things like change operation A to operation B in all routings, for a range of products or selected group code or customer. You'll also be able to add a new operation at the beginning or end of routings or before or after a specified operation. A mass delete option will also be available. Similar capabilities will be allowed for bill of material definitions. One example where this can be very handy is if you decide to start purchasing a core that you used to make. 



Dear Brenda

Brenda Povlock
Vice President — Client Services



include only records equal to blank. Or, if you have more customers who accept early shipments than those who don't, enter "No" in the customers that don't and have the report show records equal to "No."

Hope one or more of these will help you!

Odyssey

Dear Brenda,

We have some customers who are happy to have their shipments early. Is there a way to exclude these customers from our On Time Delivery report?

Early Bird Catches the Worm

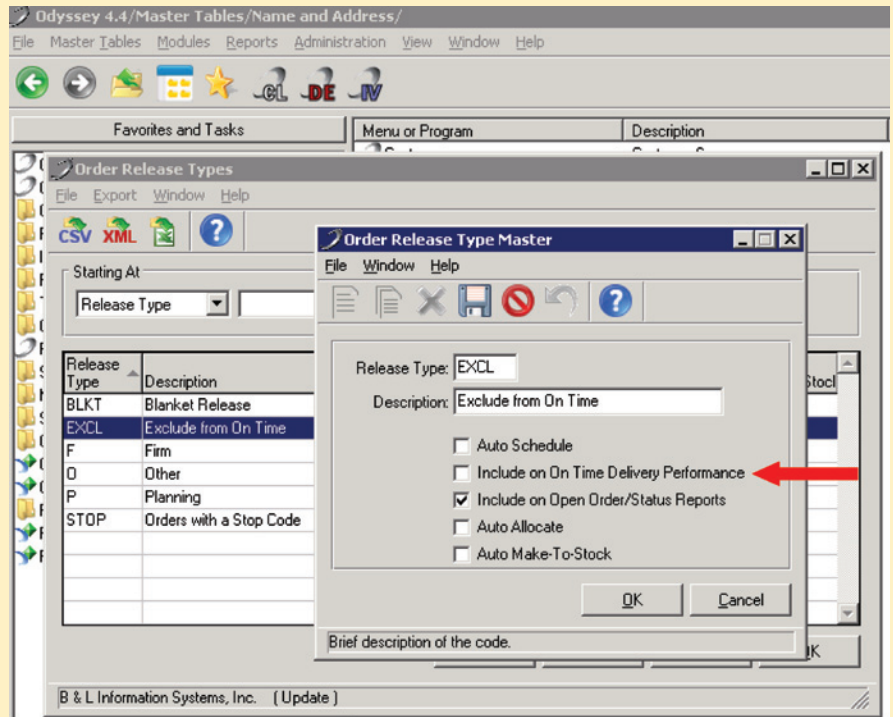
Dear Early Bird,

It's great that you are ahead of schedule and using the On Time Delivery Report to help keep you on time! Here are a few options to exclude those customers:

You could create an order release type (located under Master Tables, Codes, Order Release Type) that would have the box "Include on On Time Delivery Performance" unchecked. You could then put that code on each release of the customer order that you don't want to show. This might be used if there are only certain products that a customer will accept.

You could adjust the variance days in the Customer Master for those customers willing to accept early shipments.

Another option would be to create a user-defined field in the Customer Master and customize the On Time Delivery report to exclude customers when something exists in that field. For example, call it Early Shipments and enter "Yes" in only those customers to exclude. Have the report



BLIS-400

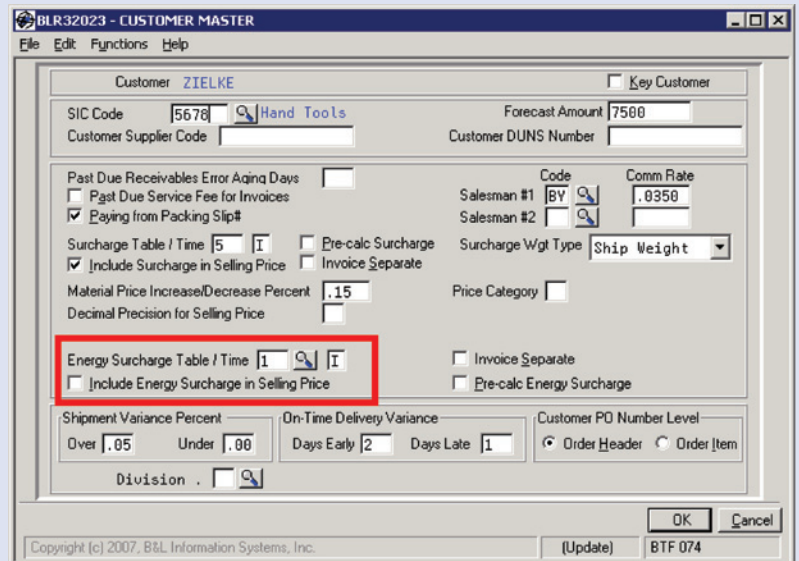
Dear Brenda,

We are starting to get requests from customers to not see the energy surcharge listed separately on the invoice. We would also like options similar to the metal surcharge for when to lock in that price. Locking it in at order entry time, for example, would give us the ability to keep our promised rate for current orders and update it for new orders. Are there any plans to enhance this area?

Energy Starved

Dear Energy,

We have heard your cries, filled our tanks, and started the engines! BLIS 7.3, which came out in March, includes an enhancement for making the energy surcharge function similar to the metal surcharge. New fields were added to the Customer Master to tell the system whether the energy surcharge should be included in the selling price and when to lock it in. This information will default into customer orders at entry time. You will be able to override them in the customer order on the overrides screen. The calculation was also changed to calculate a per piece amount, which will be used to add the surcharge to the price. Note: If you are creating a separate energy surcharge invoice, you cannot use the "include in price" feature of this enhancement.



NOTE: Due to an e-mail problem, you may have missed our January free webinar - Standard Cost Enhancements. If you did, please go view the 10 minute video in the Community. It gives a quick update and things to consider before upgrading to BLIS 7.3.

Upcoming Events

Show/Event/Webinar	Date
116th Metalcasting Congress, Columbus, OH – Booth #235	Apr. 17-20
Crystal Reports Class - B&L Offices	Apr. 24-25
Client Services Webinar – BLIS Pricing Module	May 9 – 2:00 p.m. EDT
Client Services Webinar – Odyssey Global Notifiers	June 13 – 2:00 p.m. EDT
Client Services Webinar – Heat Treat Batches	June 13 – 3:00 p.m. EDT

To attend a Client Services Webinar or class, go to B&L's online community for the schedule with times and instructions on how to join a webinar. 

TRAINING - There are recorded training videos available on-line at no charge to customers on maintenance. For access to these videos you will need to sign up for the B&L Community. Contact support@blinfo.com for assistance. For any other training needs, contact **Brenda Povlock at ext. 321**.



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