B&L NEWS

October, 2012 Vol. 20 No. 4 **Enterprise Software for Metalcasters** Editor - Sandy Warren - swarren@blinfo.com

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SPECTRUM IS....

Spectrum '12 was held September 9-11, at the Sheraton City Centre hotel in downtown Indianapolis. After a customer appreciation dinner reception on Sunday evening, attendees were kept very busy with general sessions that included a presentation on Lean Manufacturing by keynote speaker Erin Blynn (QCD Consulting), presentations from B&L's department heads on what is new and upcoming at B&L, and over 25 different mini classes taught by B&L experts.

New this year was a session of Idea Swaps, which gave attendees the opportunity to sit in on four topics of their choice (ten total topics, four 20-minute sessions) to learn and/or share ideas with other B&L software users.

Although education is our main focus at Spectrum, it is not totally about classes. Spectrum is so much more than that. It is a time to reconnect with old business colleagues and meet some new ones! It is a time to see the B&L staff face to face for questions or consulting in the cyber café. It is a time to network with people who have the

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Supporting our Clients

Phil Laney President & CEO

"My printer is jammed, help me reprint my invoices!", "I recorded production, but it's not showing up in inventory!" "Hey, the software is all froze up!" These are just a few of the wild requests that come into the B&L support group. Granted most of them aren't that crazy, they are sensible customer support questions, but we do get a few wild ones now and again.

Our support team is made up of 4 awesome individuals: Patrick McCrevan, Marcia Mullins, Lori Hnanicek and Sasha Chaddock. They each have their own unique skills and talents which blend together to make a results-oriented team to handle your day-to-day B&L software questions. They also perform other key tasks, such as managing client upgrades and new release testing for R&D. Additionally, as they grow their knowledge here at B&L, they are expanding

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B&L Welcomes New Clients

New Products Corporation
Benton Harbor, MI die caster
Odyssey

C&H Die Castings
Troy, TX die caster
Odyssey

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into providing training and consulting services to our clients in areas where they have exceptional skills; e.g., bar code labels, shipping scale interfaces, financials, etc.

But don't take my word about the incredibly supportive service they provide. A client that recently completed a Phase II implementation project on Odyssey sent in a box of cookies and a thank you note specifically to the support group. It said *"Thank you so much for helping us figure things out and for getting us through insanity, stress, uncertainty, trouble, indecision, confusion, A.D.D, impatience, stupidity, __________(add more here…). We are truly grateful. Sincerely, your customer."*

I can't say enough good things about our support staff. Once you are live on our software, they are your 1st point of contact, our storefront so to speak. They are the friendly, helpful and professional problem solvers to whom you've grown accustomed. I am honored to congratulate them on a job well done!

Phil Laney

On The Horizon

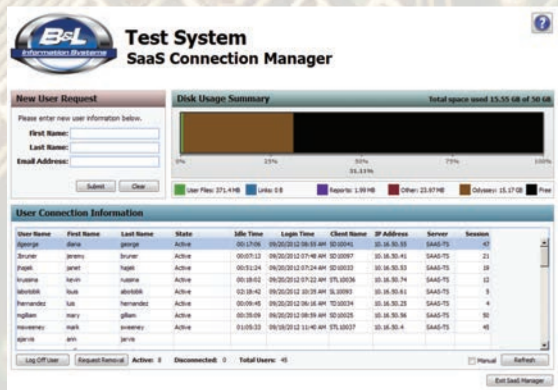
Joe Harmon
Vice President — Technology

One of the advantages of Software as a Service is eliminating the managing of Odyssey upgrades (both hardware and software). This means your company does not need to be concerned about server hardware, server backups, or server disaster recovery. Odyssey upgrades and maintenance releases are handled for you so you do not need IT staffing in-house to perform these upgrades.

One of the disadvantages is access to the server's local resources. For most this is not an issue. Why should you be concerned or want access to the local hard drives, memory chips, or anything else related to the physical machine? Quite honestly, you shouldn't.

The only reason I am bringing this up is because most of our SaaS (B&L Cloud) customers start out with an allotted disk space of 50GB. This 50GB of disk space is for the Odyssey database, links, custom reports, and other user files. Without access to the local server how are they supposed to know when they are approaching their disk capacity? Also, what about the user's connection to our server? What if they get hung up for some reason? Sure you can contact support and we can reset their session, but wouldn't it be nice if you could see disk usage and handle user connections yourself?

Let me introduce you to the new B&L SaaS Connection Manager. This web-based application allows our SaaS customers to request new users, see their disk usage broken down by category, and handle their user connections themselves. They are able to see what users are active, disconnected, how long they have been idle, what time they logged onto the system, and other pertinent client information. They can log off a user remotely (without access to the server) and request that a user be removed from the server (see screenshot).



As you can see, we have put a tool into the hands of our SaaS customers in order to resolve the disadvantage of not having direct access to the server. Also, keep in mind that this tool will evolve as the new user interface becomes available. You will no longer need access to user connections for you will be using a zero client interface instead of the remote desktop interface we use today.

R&D DEVELOPMENTS

Doug Hinman
Vice President — Research & Development

We received great feedback from many of you at Spectrum '12 in September. Actually, I can only assume so since I'm writing this in August. I'd say it's a fair assumption though, since we always get good input and suggestions (and extremely constructive criticism) at Spectrum. As we've stated, our product direction remains three-pronged: keep enhancing Odyssey while developing a new web user interface, improve Odyssey for the cloud (SaaS), and continue to support and enhance BLIS.

Even though that's only three prongs it sometimes feels more like a herd of hundreds of pronghorn antelopes. And these aren't ordinary pronghorns. They're bigger than elk, with sharp antlers, and they like to eat software developers. OK, enough of the whining. Our product direction is very important and we keep working hard at it even if a few developers end up on pronghorns' Sunday dinner tables.

Earlier this year we identified an interesting area in need of improvement – quality. It's not only interesting, it's necessary. B&L is currently in the midst of a company-wide quality initiative (I'd say quality kick but then I'd have nightmares about not only being gored by pronghorn but also being kicked). So, here's what the initiative means to software quality.

We've hired two dedicated Software Quality Analysts – Rick and Samantha. They're new, so they're not afraid of Antilocapra Americana yet. They are charged with implementing new software quality procedures which includes team testing, regression testing, documenting test cases, and more (including actually testing the software). We need to step back and keep quality in the forefront at all times, and Sam and Rick are the new sheriffs in town.

One of our detriments to software quality is we have had a tendency to cram as much into a release as possible. I take much of the blame for this because of my nature. When I would pass a developer in the hallway I'd first ask "when's your current project going to be done?" Then I would ask them how they were doing. I didn't really care about their well being, I just wanted them to like me. But, I really needed to know when we could start the next enhancement project! That's all going to change now, or so my therapist likes to tell me. Sometimes I really hate his positive attitude.

To be serious for a moment, software quality is not a luxury, it's so critical it's taken for granted. ERP applications are complex by their nature, and our software incorporates several technologies. Couple that with the tremendous growth B&L has experienced the past few years, and the need to have the best people and procedures in place is very apparent. We have made a significant investment in order to improve our quality and we intend to make it happen.

Dear Brenda

Brenda Povlock
Vice President — Client Services

Odyssey

Dear Brenda,

We have one product that has 2 different tools: one has 8 impressions and the other 4 impressions. We only want to ship against one product master, but we're thinking we need two products so we can have two different routings. We're worried about how this will affect cost as well as inventory. We really don't want to have to look at 2 product masters to figure out how many we have on hand. Any thoughts other than doing an adjustment transaction for the product we are not going to ship?

Tooling Around

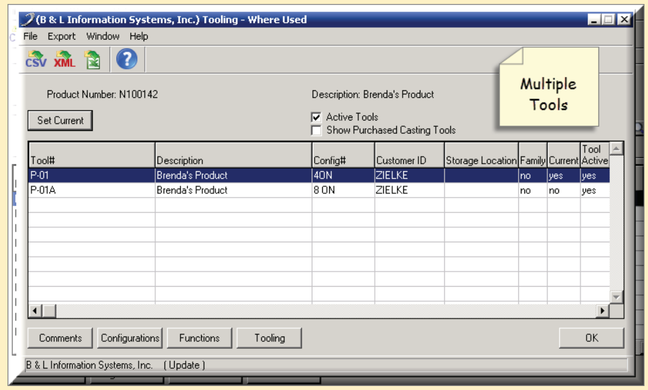
Dear Tooling Around,

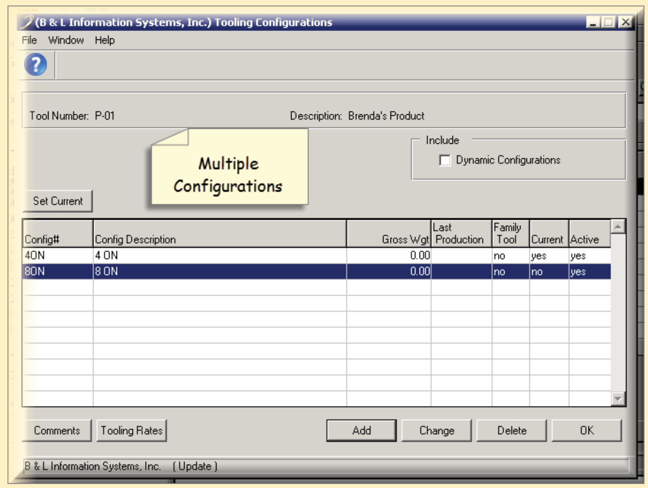
Odyssey handles multiple tools very well. Our recommendation for those situations depends on if this is a tool that you want to track impressions on (shots for die cast) or if it is one tool that you can configure differently.

If it's two tools and you want to track impressions, then set up one product master with two tools. Each tool will have one configuration. Set whichever tool you're running to "Current" or override the tool in the shop order.

If you have one tool that can be configured multiple ways, then set up one product master with one tool and two tool configurations. Each configuration would have a different #On (8 or 4 respectively).

Either way, this will allow you to ship off of one product. Your standard costs would be driven by the standard operation. Depending on how different the routings are for each tool, you can either set up two different ones or set up an alternate routing. Note: If the routing operations were the same but needed different rates for the different tools, you could assign different rates on the tool by using the tooling rate button. This would keep your inventory and cost correct and create much less confusion than having two products. I would say noodle on that for a while, but in your case you should tool-dle on that for a while!





BLIS-400

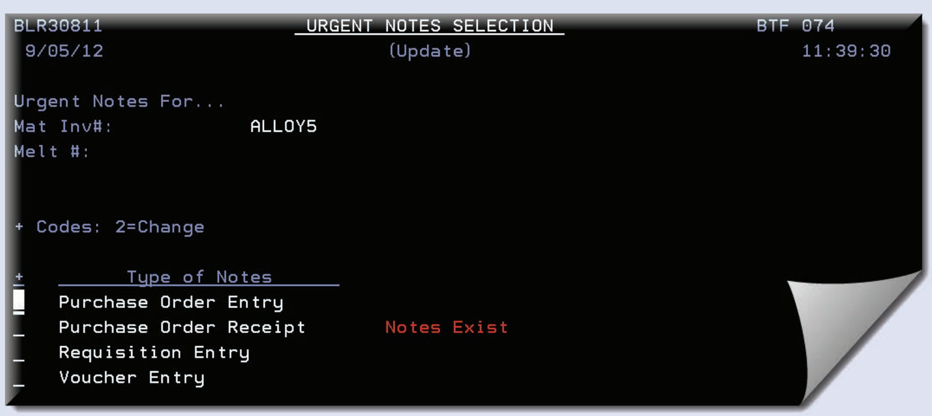
Dear Brenda,

We really need the ability to attach some kind of notifier on a material inventory number. There are times we need to notify the purchasing department of different things; for example, our normal approved vendor shuts down every year the last 2 weeks of July, and we need to order from our alternate, or when we receive this material it must be delivered to the supervisor of the maintenance department. What would you suggest is the best way to handle this?

Desperately waiting to be notified

Dear Desperate,

Don't get too distressed! There is an enhancement available in 7.3 that should take care of your problem. We added Urgent Notes to Material Inventory items, and you have the option of the note popping up at requisitions time, purchase order, receipt, or even at voucher time.



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same work issues as you do, and a time to just have a little fun such as enjoying an evening at Lucas Oil Stadium. This year's attendees enjoyed a delicious dinner and tours of this awesome facility, including the Colts locker room, the press box, and actually going out onto the field! To sum it up, Spectrum is a place to learn and bring home a wealth of information with the added value of making important contacts.

Thank you to everyone who attended and helped to make this year's user conference another great one!

Editor's Note: Spectrum is B&L's annual users conference.

Upcoming Events & Training

Show/Event/Webinar	Date	Location
Shows:		
ICI (Booth #112)	Oct. 8 & 9	Gaylord Opryland Hotel, Nashville, TN
Die Casting Congress (Booth #802)	Oct. 8-10	Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis, IN
NFFS	Oct. 14-17	Green Valley Ranch Resort, Henderson, NV
Customer Training:		
Crystal Reports Class	Oct. 23 & 24	B&L Offices, Bridgman, MI
Customer Webinars:		
Part 1 – Production	Oct. 10 2:00 p.m. EDT	
Part 2 – Financial	Oct. 10 3:00 p.m. EDT	
BLIS Year-End Procedures	Nov. 14 2:00 p.m. EST	
Odyssey Creating Data Views	Nov. 14 3:00 p.m. EST	
Odyssey Using Intelligent Views	Dec. 12 2:00 p.m. EST	

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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