

Jul

08

Boston Grape Escape 2010: Vendor's Announcements Review

by [Aleksey Osintsev](#)

Recently, I attended the Grape Escape analyst event in Boston. This was the 10th annual meeting organized by Judith Rothrock's marketing company to present her clients and announce some news. I had the opportunity to listen and informally talk to software vendors, their clients, and industry analysts in addition to three one-on-one briefings with top managers from UNIT4, SYSPRO, and Meridian Systems.

UNIT4

Known for its unique "embracing change" approach on the applications market, UNIT4 announced that it released **VITA CloudAngel** enterprise resource planning (ERP) software deployment option that allows customers to use UNIT4 products in unlimited combinations of internal and external, shared and private clouds, as well as hybrids with traditional on-premise options. It is noteworthy that UNIT4 will soon offer four pre-built vertical market solutions for VITA CloudAngel: Professional Services, Not for Profit, Higher Education, and Health, which are supposed to reduce implementation time significantly.

Another interesting application that was announced and released by UNIT4 was **Sustain4**—an environmental performance management solution. Its purpose is to trace, control, and report a company's environmental impact on gas emission, natural resources usage, water consumption, etc., using a company's existing data. Environmental data traceability compliance is now a big deal in Europe so this application can help many companies to stay on top with minimum spending on the software as the product is offered as an on demand deployment mode.

As a part of UNIT4 business, **FinancialForce.com** has announced the availability of **VMforce connector service** for Java developers who may use this tool to incorporate FinancialForce.com accounting functionality into their own Force.com-based software applications. Using pre-configured Web services and many other framework features, it is supposed to simplify access to accounting functionality and make the integration process easier and faster. This VMforce connector service is scheduled to be previewed around the end of 2010.

The second announcement made by FinancialForce.com is something that their end users will appreciate—new release (Summer '10) of a software that includes, among other things, a new embedded enterprise-wide **chatting tool called Chatter**. Chatter's functionality is similar to a mix of famous social networks and designed to shorten communication between people in different departments and lessen e-mail usage. Considering geographical dispersion of FinancialForce.com's typical clients, it seems that Chatter would be a much appreciated option.

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SYSPRO

Everyone at the event had an opportunity to personally congratulate Joey Benadretti and Brian Stein (President and chief executive officer (CEO) of the ERP vendor [SYSPRO](#), respectively) for helping SYSPRO win multiple IT and business awards. They also made three new announcements about their software at the event. The biggest news is that SYSPRO has joined a “SaaS club” (a virtual community of software vendors that offer SaaS-version of their ERP systems) and their software is now available on the cloud (it’s simply called SaaS – ‘**SYSPRO as a Service**’). If you are considering cloud-based manufacturing ERP, SYSPRO can be a good option here. It is now in Phase 1, which is single-tenant subscription-based but in the measurable future the company is promising a real multi-tenant application, which is supposed to be more user-friendly and simple, more secure, and less costly.

Another two announcements made by SYSPRO concerned ERP software improvements—a new **enterprise performance management** (EPM) tool that includes improved analytical and reporting capabilities along with multiple pre-built executive dashboards and cash flow forecasting; and new **business process management** (BPM) application that allows users to manage workflows and modeling processes in one combined application using a visual and intuitive way of interacting.

Meridian Systems

John Bodrozic and Susan Watkins, President and Director of Marketing, respectively, at [Meridian Systems](#), a successful architecture, construction, and engineering (ACE) project management software developing company, shared their concerns on the recent devastating disasters such as earthquakes and the on-going oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. They spoke about how the aftermath of these events were handled. It looks like there is no software on the market that offers extended functionality that can help plan avoidance, or, in the worst case scenario, to control and manage recovery efforts as a single project. Meridian Systems is going to concentrate on this type of activity and offer valuable software for governmental and private organizations.

It is quite difficult to describe everything discussed at the event within one blog post, so our senior analyst P.J. Jakovljevic is going to present more detailed analysis in his upcoming series. Stay tuned.

Aleksey Osintsev is a research analyst with TEC. His interests are broad and cover topics ranging from manufacturing and information technology to music and raising kids. He is an experienced optimist and highly appreciates a sense of humor.

TEC Blog: <http://blog.technologyevaluation.com/blog/2010/07/08/boston-grape-escape-2010-vendor%E2%80%99s-announcements-review/>

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