TOWARD A MOOC FOR MICROSOFT DYNAMICS GP

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Abstract: Design goals for readily available, web-based, online instruction for Microsoft Dynamics GP – a modern, widely used state-of-the-practice ERP – are proposed and validated. Technical

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

At root many university courses and majors address business process execution and automation, especially in the information technology and business disciplines. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software optimizes business process execution and automation by streamlining processes, providing enterprise wide visibility and access, and providing the basis for business intelligence and e-collaboration with customers and vendors. A natural and obvious consequence of these two facts is a strong interest in exposing students to ERP software among instructors of courses like accounting information systems, management information systems, supply chain management, operations management, enterprise information technology, and many others.

The Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance (DynAA) [1] and SAP University Alliance [2] are exemplars of leading ERP software vendors – and there are others – who make their state-of-practice ERP software available for use in university instruction. This support is not trivial and the purchase cost of equivalent licenses the alliances provide individual academic institutions would run to 5, 6, or 7 figures for commercial installations. Despite this support (and, partly, because of it since without the low or no-cost ERP licenses providing ERP exposure to students would be truly prohibitive) academics face the significant challenge of creating or leasing the enterprise information technology infrastructure to support the ERP. Further there are challenges connecting a student audience which is becoming more mobile and distributed with the ERP, providing quick and engaging support in learning the ERP interface, and developing accessible but realistic scenarios for use in curriculum.

Academics have put a great deal of creative effort into resolving these challenges and the breadth and depth of their success is a testament their commitment to making their discipline accessible and relevant to students. The literature is full of examples of curriculum and pedagogical success in bring ERP software to the classroom. In particular the Proceedings of the Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance Preconference [3] (held just before Microsoft's annual Convergence meeting) contain numerous examples of these efforts. In addition efforts like ErpSim [4] and Simulation AX [5] are efforts at bringing enterprise applications into the university classroom.

The advent of a web client for Microsoft Dynamics GP brings a great opportunity to lower the barriers to instructional use of the software. While there is still significant planning and establishment of infrastructure to put it in place, the GP Web Client provides students a familiar means to engage with the software via most browsers at any time and from any internet enabled location. This has the potential to significantly reshape introduction of enterprise software in courses, especially in courses where hands-on with the software is only a small part of the overall activities.

The GP Web Client and the Microsoft technologies on which it is based (notably SQL Server, .Net development, Silverlight, and Internet Information Services) will provide an excellent platform for relatively massive, open, online course 'segments' (often called MOOCS) for Dynamics GP. Massive means, probably, hundreds of students per installation and open would of course be restricted by institutional membership in the DynAA, but the principle of

obtaining a login and pointing a browser to the right location to engage with instruction, assessment, and hands-on use of the software is now possible.

This presentation will highlight the design goals such development should exhibit and provide some proof-of-principle demonstrations with the Microsoft Dynamics GP 2013 Web Client. In addition, ideas and suggestions for applying this approach in academic courses will be reviewed.

REFERENCES

[1] Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance, http://www.microsoft.com/education/ww/leadership/Pages/dynamics-academic-alliance.aspx (link validated Jan 2014)

[2] SAP University Alliance Learning Center, http://scn.sap.com/community/uac/learning-center (link validated Jan 2014)

[3] The Proceedings of the Worldwide Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance Preconference (Associated with Microsoft Dynamics Convergence) http://50.241.208.82/DYNAAProceedings/ (link validated Jan 2014)

[4] ERPSim Lab http://erpsim.hec.ca/ (link validated Jan 2014)

[5] Introduction to Simulation AX
http://clcloud.com/dynaa2014/DYNAA%20Preconference%20Agenda%202013.pdf (link validated Jan 2014)