



Everest meets midmarket needs

REVIEW: OFFERS COMPREHENSIVE ERP APPS, REQUIRES CONFORMANCE TO ITS PROCESSES

By Michael Caton

ICODE INC.'S EVEREST ATTEMPTS TO PARTIALLY fill the large gap between full-blown ERP systems and point-oriented financial and inventory management applications. eWEEK Labs' tests show that Everest delivers a wide range of capabilities for a reasonable price, but it will require a relatively large investment in training and data migration, as well as conformance to its processes.

In eWeek Labs' tests, client/server-based Everest Standard Edition 6.0 delivered about 80 percent of what a small-to-midsize business would want from an enterprise resource planning application, including accounting, inventory management, e-commerce, shipping, receiving and returns management (see graphic, on back). The application is lacking, at least to some extent, in the areas of sales management, international support and the ability to readily integrate with other complex applications.

Everest's database server, Extended Systems Inc.'s Advantage Database Server, runs on Windows NT 4.0 and Windows 2000, NetWare 5.0, and Linux 2.4. The client requires Windows 2000 or Windows XP Professional.

An upgrade to Icode's Accware, Everest is geared toward companies upgrading from applications such as Intuit Inc.'s QuickBooks. Everest Standard Edition costs \$1,463 per concurrent user—a compelling price relative to a full-blown ERP solution such as SAP AG's R/3 and Siebel Systems Inc.'s Siebel. Icode also leases the Everest software at a more affordable \$42 per concurrent user per month for 60 months.

Aside from the software investment, Everest requires a considerable investment in planning, training and data migration. To

a lesser degree, companies will also need to plan on investing resources in customization development or tapping Icode's reseller or consultant channel to get up and running.

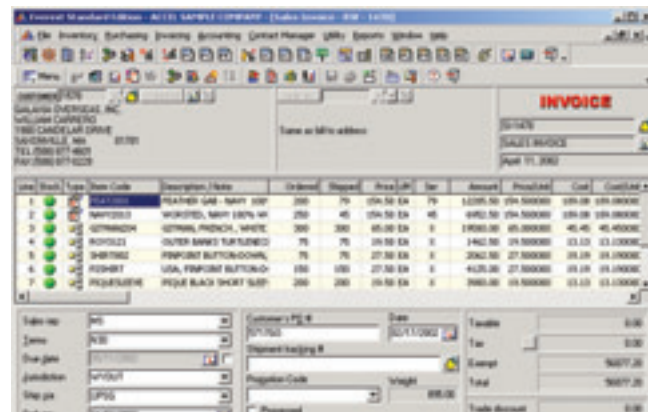
Companies should expect to tailor their processes to fit Everest, rather than the other way around, so the package will be most appealing to organizations that haven't made substantial investments in business technology beyond basic accounting software.

Companies that have well-entrenched processes, particularly on the sales side, will have to make a cultural commitment if they expect an investment in Everest to pay off. Any company that still relies on paper for any of these processes, or has to manually synchronize data among applications, will see a substantial return on investment.

Financial strengths

GIVEN EVEREST'S FOUNDATION AS AN ACCOUNTING application, it's not surprising that its financial management features were the strongest of the suite. We could easily create and manage accounts payable and receivable, inventory, and payroll. Furthermore, the software includes a comprehensive array of canned financial reports and memos.

We were disappointed, however, in Everest's customer relationship management features, largely because the application takes a task-centric view of customers based on the sales process. In addition, contact management is treated separately from customer tracking, with customer tracking being managed through invoices, inventory and purchasing.



Icode's Everest provides easy access to its many applications.

Everest Advanced Edition does include a more comprehensive sales force automation application, with features such as opportunity management and a sales funnel for qualifying leads.

As a client/server application, particularly one that is running sales applications on the same system as payroll, controlling access to information is a critical concern.

Everest's security features allow administrators a good amount of flexibility in controlling user privileges at the most granular level. And we used group as well as individual user settings, for example, to manage access to the broad range of information running on Everest.

On the e-commerce side, we found the pricing management tools to be robust, allowing us to create complex pricing schemes based on criteria such as volume, one-time discounts and sales. The package also includes a number of e-commerce enhancements, including support for CVV2 security code on credit cards and support for VeriSign Inc.'s Payflow Pro credit card processing. Enabling Everest for e-commerce requires setting up Everest E-commerce

Standard Edition, which comes with the suite, on a dedicated Web server.

Capturing and processing transactions extends beyond the Web to storefronts. Everest can also integrate with point-of-sale hardware such as bar-code scanners and printers, pole LCDs, cash drawers, and keyboard/credit card swipers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Everest Standard Edition 6.0

For small-to-medium-size companies that need to grow beyond

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

USABILITY	FAIR
CAPABILITY	GOOD
PERFORMANCE	GOOD
INTEROPERABILITY	GOOD
MANAGEABILITY	GOOD
SCALABILITY	GOOD
SECURITY	EXCELLENT

basic accounting software, Icode's Everest Standard Edition 6.0 delivers a comprehensive set of tools in a somewhat cumbersome package.

Everest costs a reasonable \$1,463 per concurrent user, but companies should also expect to invest in training, data migration and consulting services to get the most out of the application. For

more information, go to www.icode.com/everest/standard.

- Very good financial applications; comprehensive set of canned reports; relatively inexpensive for an ERP package.
- User interface is complex; some business processes will need to be adapted to the software.

EVALUATION SHORT LIST

- Automation Tech Inc.'s MiniERP
- Exact Software's e-Synergy
- Home-grown solutions using applications tied to a SQL database

Too much information

ONE PROBLEM WITH EVEREST IS that the array of information it provides to administrators and end users alike can be overwhelming. Although the menu system makes it easy to access forms and data, at times it was

easy to lose track of information because so many of the forms are nearly identical in appearance. In addition, we had to do some digging to access some forms and data. For example, to input customer tracking information, such as referral data, we had to drill down a couple of form levels.

The product has a few other user interface shortcomings:

Drop-down menus in forms can be cumbersome, and the reports menu has so many options in the submenu that it is almost unmanageable.

ERP in a box

Icode's Everest includes most of the ERP and commerce functionality small and medium-size businesses need

- ▶ **Accounting** general ledger, accounts receivable, accounts payable
- ▶ **Payroll** U.S. payroll, time clock
- ▶ **Inventory control** returned-merchandise authorization, bar-code printing and scanning, serial number tracking, stock areas
- ▶ **Marketing** contact management, marketing analysis, customer tracking
- ▶ **Sales** e-commerce, point of sale, job costing and quoting, order entry, credit card processing

However, there are also well-designed elements in Everest, including the payroll management component. Managing changes to payroll information, such as federal, state and unemployment tax rates, was straightforward in tests.

Natively, Everest Standard Edition exports XML data using its own schemas. Advanced Edition, which runs on Microsoft Corp.'s SQL Server 2000, provides more options and better native support for connecting to external applications through XML.

For those looking to create additional reports, the database running under Everest is Open Database Connectivity-compliant, so users can create custom reports using Crystal Decisions Inc.'s Crystal Reports, for example. ☛

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