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Affordable integrated systems get SA SMMEs buzzing

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South Africa's small and medium businesses, long deprived of the benefits of integrated business systems because of their high price, have responded enthusiastically to the entry of leading ERP and CRM vendor HansaWorld.

"There is huge pent-up demand for affordable ERP systems in the mid-market," says HansaWorld's Johani Marais. "We have seen a 275% increase in client numbers since January 2006. Once people realise that their legacy of having separate systems for accounts, e-mail, point-of-sale and so on is not the only way to do things, they are very quick to change."

Marais says HansaWorld offers versions suitable for everyone from the one-person home office through medium-sized businesses and professional firms, and is even scalable to large enterprises.

"There has never been anything like it available in South Africa before," says Marais. "Our clients are telling us they are just beginning to realise what it means to have complete control over their business, with information at their fingertips that enables them to know exactly what is happening at every level."

As an example of the power of integration, Marais cites HansaWorld's ability to combine information from different parts of the business into a single customer report which is constantly updated. "Every e-mail, invoice, order or quotation and all project information is instantly available in a single report which updates automatically whenever any kind of activity happens on that client account. It gives managers unprecedented insight into exactly who their customers are - who spends the most, who pays quickest, what the most popular product lines are and so on. It is a powerful decision making tool."

Marais adds that HansaWorld invests heavily in research and development and is constantly refining and updating its products. "We have released our Business phone functionality that integrates HansaWorld with a company's SIP Server so that a customer status report will open automatically when an employee takes a call from that customer. It will make things much faster and more convenient for the customer as well as employees."

HansaWorld's flagship Enterprise product for medium to large businesses won the Accountancy Age award for Mid-Range Software of the Year 2006.

Judges noted that HansaWorld's entry demonstrated technical innovation, included some impressive features and offered value for money. Implementations were under budget and on time, and the product demonstrated wide functionality.



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