embrace TALK

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Left: Key members of the Customer Support Team

Editors Note

Welcome to another edition of *embraceTALK*. The last four months at ACS have been busy and given us a lot to TALK about.

In this edition, we focus on our Customer Support Division, under the leadership of Marcel Kitay and TALK about plans in place to deliver "Service beyond Excellence". This team goes the extra mile, and in the words of Roger Staubach, *"There are no traffic jams along the extra mile."* Take note of our special feature, which includes some tips on how to maximise you Data Base efficiency with just 10 minutes of basic system housekeeping every day.

We showcase our 'Team Stars' who were recognised at our annual Financial Year End Function for their achievements, as well as our loyal, dedicated team members, who are fast becoming "part of the furniture."

We welcome our new clients to our ACS-Embrace family as well as new staff members. We wish you a long and happy partnership with us.

It is with great pride that we present our case study on our *"Win-Win Partnership"* with Merck SA and talk about how ACS-Embrace has been the enabling force allowing Merck SA to achieve their business objectives.

Don't forget to diarise Sunday 4th September – The inaugural Annual ACS Kite Day! This is a community event that we are proudly hosting. Bring your own kite or join us for a workshop, on the day, and make your own. We look forward to an exciting, windy, family fun day with good food and lots of prizes to be won. Don't miss out and remember *"Kites rise highest against the wind, not with it".* -Winston Churchill.

Jeanette

From the desk of our Customer Support Director - Marcel Kitay

We, at ACS, believe that our most important stakeholders are our customers. We are in business to serve the needs and desires of our core customer base. *"Customer service is not a department, it's everyone's job."*

Being in the unique position of having worked in all of the Divisions in ACS over the past 24 years, I have no doubt that the Customer Support Division is the most challenging environment in which to operate. Our Development and Projects Divisions operate with the advantage of having clearly defined timelines and objectives, whereas Support looks after the 'last mile', not only responsible for ensuring that everything works the way that it should, but also responsible for understanding and meeting the ever changing requirements of a diverse customer base.

An important element of successfully meeting this challenge was the creation of the role of the Account Manager, a multi faceted job, requiring diverse skills. Account Managers are generalists, with a good understanding of business and of Embrace. They are technical and are able to deal with issues immediately or co-ordinate resources to address requirements that are more complex. Account Managers have the advantage of working in a variety of industries and are often able to bring unique perspectives and solutions to the business problems experienced by their customers. They are also called on to consult beyond the strict ambit of Embrace because of their in -depth knowledge of their customers' environments.

In the early days account managers 'did it all', including configuring hardware and networks, implementing systems and developing new customised software. To meet these increasingly complex requirements, account managers still have to 'know it all', but now they work with an expanded team to meet customers' needs.

Another important component of our support policy is the Steering Meeting, a regular, short meeting, in which management from both companies participate. Steering meetings oversee activity on the site as well as providing an opportunity to exchange news and views from both sides. We use them to update clients on the latest and planned developments at ACS and to ensure that all support issues are being addressed. Understanding customers' future requirements allows ACS to plan resources accordingly.

Service Level Agreements have been created to formalise relationships and to define expectations and response times in line with the requirements promulgated by King III. ACS Support now also offers the option of guaranteed after-hours response by a rotating pool of Account Managers, contactable through a single telephone number. Please feel free to contact us for more information about this service.

A new and exciting development to improve the level of support offered by ACS is the creation of the Support Centre, which will be staffed by high-level personnel from our Support, Projects and Development divisions. It will include the Help Desk, backed by a team of experts and they will have the capability to respond faster to queries and problems. More information will be supplied once the centre is fully operational.

With the restructuring of our support offering, we have also set up a new team dedicated to customised development. The intention is to create a closer relationship between Support and R&D. Customised programs, with the potential to be considered for inclusion into standard package, will be developed to standard package standards and then motivated for inclusion in subsequent versions of Embrace.

ACS was founded on the concept of "Customers for Life" and over the past few years we have celebrated 5, 10, 15 and 20 year anniversaries with our clients. From an ACS perspective, they are a testament to our ability to innovate and continuously develop functionally relevant software. From a support perspective, it is a celebration of enduring relationships built over the years. As said by Robert Half, *"When the customer comes first, the customer will last."* — **Marcel Kitay**

Academy *TALK*

The following courses are scheduled to take place over the next 3 months.

ACS-Embrace Generic Training

Module	October
Purchasing	4th
Shipping	5th & 6th
Inventory	11th & 12th
Reconfigures	18th & 19th
Sales	18th – 20th

Module	September	November
Desktop	6th & 7th	
Financial Overview	7th	2nd
General Ledger	7th	2nd
Financial Statements	8th	3rd
Debtors	13th & 14th	8th & 9th
Local Creditors	20th	15th
Foreign Creditors	21st	16th
Cash Book	22nd	17th
Fixed Assets	27th	22nd

Don't forget Report Writing and Programming Training which takes place every week on **"Technical Tuesday"!**

Maximise Your System Performance

Reduced system performance, reports taking too long to process, back-ups that are slow and take up excessive storage and cumbersome files are the bane of any IT managers' existence.

Progressive organisations expect their IT departments to manage data storage more efficiently and cost effectively, to optimize system performance and mitigate the risk of information loss.

The good news for IT departments using ACS-Embrace, is that the relational database we use is highly efficient, low on overhead and self-maintaining. Having said this however, even the best highly tuned machine will benefit from a little TLC and maintenance.

These goals can be achieved by the implementation of basic housekeeping procedures on the database.

Benefits of a proper housekeeping procedure implementation are:

- Cost savings
- Time savings
- Investment protection
- Efficient use of resources
- Reduced backup times
- Reduced reconciliation times
- Faster report completion
- Speedier Day-End processing

It is recommended that Embrace users/System Administrators perform housekeeping on an on-going basis to ensure maximum system efficiency and security.

ACS-Embrace recommends the following housekeeping procedures:

- **Resizing**
    - Monthly: this removes "deadwood" from files
- **Capacity planning**
    - Size Monitoring with conversion to 64 Bit when files exceed 1.50 GB
    - Monthly CHKDSK (Windows) or fsck (Unix) as well as Embrace CHECK.FILES
    - Review File Sizing parameters and set minimum modulus
- **Relocation**
    - Relocate "History" annually
    - Relocate "Month" monthly
- **Purging**
    - Summary: Keep past 5 years plus "Current Year"
    - History: Keep past 5 years plus "Current Year"
    - Master File: Purge annually

- Transaction Files: Keep past 12 months plus "Current Month". Older files to be moved to "History".
    - General Sub Ledger: Keep past 12 months plus "Current Month".
    - Clean all other files
- **General**
    - Clean Account: Annually
    - Indexing: Quarterly review
- **Shutdown / Restart**
- **Back up and Recovery**
    - Use cycling system
    - Daily 1 to 31 Daily backups with a "DAY" cycle
    - Tapes to be allocated by "Day"
    - Monthly 1 to 12: Keep past 12 months plus "Current Month".
    - Annual 1 to 5: Keep past 5 years plus "Current Year".
    - Back-up verification to be performed weekly
- **Disaster Recovery**
    - Plan should be in place with Embrace Considerations

These time frames should reflect the regulatory and statutory requirements governing the specific organisation.Hashed files are perfect for supporting a database allowing rapid access to variable length records, with widely ranging keys and data. The ability to offer these variable length records, is a unique benefit offered by ACS-Embrace. Maintenance is however required to keep these files performing at peak efficiency. As records are added, the groups of the file fill up and the additional data is stored in overflow buffers. The chain of overflow can become lengthy and retrieving and/or updating data records stored in overflow, utilises more system resources and is slower.

ACS-Embrace has developed and included all the tools necessary to manage these overflows and so ensure that our clients achieve their performance and security goals with ease. It is crucial that we all ensure that these tools are properly used and used at the right intervals to maintain maximum system output, veracity and security.

By correctly recommending a proper housekeeping procedure, tailor made to meet the needs of each customer; we can enhance your experience with ACS-Embrace. Please ask your ACS-Support Account Manager for assistance.

For more information please ask for the white paper "Embrace Housekeeping" that covers this important issue. This "easy reference" covers the utilities and their use.

Embrace - the active enabling ingredient in MERCK South Africa's Success

MERCK

Merck (Pty) Ltd South Africa is part of German-based global pharmaceutical manufacturer, Merck KGaA. The company prides itself on having had representatives in South Africa for more than 100 years in industrial chemicals and have been registered as an entity in their own right in pharmaceuticals, for more than 40 years. Merck's South African annual turnover is about R700m. It employs about 200 people at production facilities and takes care of sales, distribution and technical support of a broad range of pharmaceutical, consumer health care and chemical products.

Merck implemented the ACS-Embrace Business Solution 18 years ago, when they had their own warehouse, imported pharmaceutical products and did simple local production. Their business model has completely changed and evolved since then. *"Ours is a complex, challenging environment. We are a multi-national company. ACS-Embrace has had to evolve to meet our changing business requirements."* Paul Palm: Director-Information Services Division.

There were many acquisitions, all of which needed to be integrated into Merck's business solution, such as the purchase of a factory in Wadeville. Manufacturing chemicals is very different to manufacturing cars and other equipment. What goes into the mix is vastly different from what comes out and chemicals have yield variances. The Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) have a shelf life, as do the finished products made from these ingredients. The enhanced monitoring of the raw material use-by dates and batch quality control, in Embrace, ensures that they are not left with expired stock and that there is no wastage. ACS implemented and integrated a sophisticated MRP solution to meet these complex requirements. Full visibility, inventory control, forecasting and demand management within Embrace are critical to the success of their business. The factory was recently sold to a Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Company, who are also running on Embrace, and they are doing "Toll Manufacturing" on behalf of Merck.

Merck SA operates in three different markets and Embrace caters for all these business models. They sell a wide range of chemicals, from routine to speciality, used in mining and cosmetics, all of which are classified, controlled and tracked within Embrace. These include hazardous chemicals and "fridge" stock, which

also need to be stored separately. Restrictions are in place within Embrace to prevent incompatible chemicals from being stored, packed or sold together. They sell in multiple currencies, have many different pricing models and have full control and traceability of their products within Embrace.

Merck also outsources to and works with Third parties. *"To keep abreast of our changing business and global reporting requirements, ACS-Embrace has had to remain an agile, world class solution. They have written many interfaces for a range of third parties, to facilitate our business and enable us to meet our objectives."*, added Paul Palm.

Merck has volunteered to be a BETA site for many of the Embrace Update Releases and have stayed at the leading edge of the curve. They were early adopters of EDI and Web Trading, have worked as a team with the Embrace Developers, testing all the modules, before deploying successfully. They are currently on the latest release of Embrace and are busy implementing Purchase Order Workflow to control procurement, the enhanced Fixed Assets Management module, the new balancing routines in the General Ledger and the Service module.

"This has been and will continue to be a true Win-Win Partnership. We have a highly technical environment and run a lean IT Department. ACS has been the enabling force allowing us to achieve our business objectives.", continued Paul Palm.

Merck e-Commerce "MeComm" interfaces to Embrace, to populate the website and interact with the web, importing transactions into Embrace. Customers find this convenient e-Commerce facility very useful.

The Cognos Suite of Business Intelligence Tools has been tightly integrated into Embrace, enabling enhanced reporting. Embrace imports and exports data to and from their global Head Office systems. *"We have accurate, reliable financial reports, with detailed transactional data. We believe that Embrace has paid for itself many times over. We have enjoyed a significant return on our investment in all areas of our business. We would not be where we are today without ACS-Embrace!"* concludes the Director of Merck's Information Services Division, Paul Palm.

Embrace Outreach *TALK*

"No act of kindness, no matter however small, is ever wasted." - Aesop

ACS continues to support the Ikwezilokusa Home in De Deur, Meyerton. Donations made are two-fold: firstly, ACS as a company donates a significant sum of money on an annual basis; secondly, the ACS staff and their families voluntarily donate their own time and money. This self-sacrificing love displayed by ACS Staff is appreciated the most. There has been an increase in the number of adults with various profoundly debilitating disabilities being brought to the home by hospital liaisons. Amongst them are qualified professionals such as accountants and teachers. It is unfortunate to see how trauma and change affect the lives of some people and this helps us to appreciate who we are and what we have. In an effort to assist Ikwezilokusa, ACS staff has successfully achieved the goal of providing those living at the home with hand knitted blankets, duvets with covers, new pillows with pillowslips, items of food, clothing, toys, sweets, crisps, cool drinks and shoes.

Whenever our Outreach Team visits the home, they receive an overwhelming reception from the patients. During the last visit, they were greeted with an impromptu speech from one of the patients who thanked them *"for always remembering them as being human and regarding them as people who have rights"*. They were requested to respond with 'words of wisdom'.

Sylvester, injured in a car accident, is very skilled in drawing. He presented each team member with a drawing, which he personally signed. Another patient who is able to do bead work gave a key ring as a gift.

We are currently assisting the home with general repairs and maintenance, including the painting of all the buildings.

We have already awarded a R65,000.00 contract for the urgent repair of the roof. Since this on-going maintenance and support is a costly exercise, we invite you, our partners, to join us in our campaign in assisting the Ikwezilokusa Home and making a difference. We thank the Outreach Team for the fantastic job they have done and their selfless commitment to those less fortunate than themselves. The achievements at the home have been outstanding and are a wonderful reflection on the calibre of the people who work at ACS.

Team Embrace *TALK*

In the last 3 months, we have had some movers, shakers and top achievers. We start by welcoming and introducing you to our new team members:

From Left: Brad van Jaarsveld, Carina Joubert, Maidi Sexwale, Susan Wolpe and Lars Haacke

Lars Haacke and Maidi Sexwale have joined the Sales and Marketing Team. They are young, full of new ideas and keen to make their mark on the team.

Brad van Jaarsveld has joined the Support Centre, to assist at the Help Desk. Brad joins with 4 years of Embrace experience and has already proven himself to be a friendly, helpful voice, on the other end of the phone, for many of our clients.

Carina Joubert joins our Customer Support Team as an Account Manager. She brings with her a wealth of experience in ERP Solutions, especially in Embrace and is proof that dynamite comes in small packages.

Susan Wolpe has taken over the reins as Office - Manager. In the short time she has been at ACS she has made a big difference to the smooth running of our office environment.

We say farewell to Elza Browning, who, after 15 years of service, retired from ACS in June. Elza was a member of the Projects Team, where she specialised in the Financial Modules, as a business analyst and trainer. We wish her "Bon Voyage" as she travels to visit her family around the world.

Elza Browning

Long Service Awards

From Top Left: Delene Wookey (5 Years of Service), Erik Lutz (5 Years of Service), Sherman Wilson (5 Years of Service), **Bottom Left:** Barry Taylor (5 Years of Service), Jeanette Teles (10 Years of Service), Su-anne Kruger (10 Years of Service).

Above: Alethea Miller (20 Years of Service) Award presented by Steve Wookey, Managing Director

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