

A Business Case for 11i OM and E-Commerce Gateway

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Order Management

Managing customer orders is a key component of any company. A clear understanding of how Oracle 11i processes orders will assist in minimizing the eighty percent of the time that is spent on twenty percent of the orders. If automated processing of these orders is introduced, specifically EDI in high volume, the complexities can highlight unforeseen challenges faced in maintaining timely order processing.

If provisions are not made to effectively implement the technology, a few problematic orders building in a queue and not being processed, will begin to consume more and more of the company resources until the problematic orders, even though small in number, become the main focus of the functional personnel.

The following methodology, based on experiences in with mid-market companies, is used to address these issues.

The Language Barrier

Organizations, by nature, tend to develop their own languages in terms of how the business processes are communicated between employees, departments, management, executives, etc. Any discipline, especially technology, also has it's own set of syntactic rules. To add to this, the syntax adopted by an organization when it comes to describing the day-to-day functionality in terms of the interaction with current systems tends to be described in terms specific to the installed system; whether it be the name of a specific report, describing an inventory transfer, or the shipment of product—as an example Oracle defines the release of orders to the warehouse as a Pick Wave Move Order. Try to explain a Pick Wave Move Order to a non-Oracle user who doesn't understand the term, or, is not familiar with shipping and warehousing processes.

Overcoming this language barrier during the initial stages of the Discovery phase will provide countless benefits and avoid numerous misunderstandings of objectives once the functionality of the software begins to be tested. A first step in being able to do this is a solid understanding of the industry standard processes that the client is performing. There will always be the unique aspects of how a particular company approaches a solution. Often times, however, if researched and traced to the origination of these unique processes, it is usually found that they derived from a workaround to a particular problem and a good many of the unique processes can be handled in a standard fashion during the transition to a new system. Don't worry about the workarounds initially; even though this is what client's like to thoroughly describe—they're proud of them—they can become rabbit chases very quickly. If a common understanding of the basic processes is arrived at quickly, a very solid foundation will have been laid that can be built on without having to make repairs.

The Understanding of Business Processes

If an understanding of the client's business processes can be achieved quickly, this is a good point at which to start introducing how Oracle handles the processes. However, if there is not a good understanding of the Oracle processes, this is an area that can cause a good deal of confusion in setting expectations if Oracle is not communicated effectively or if questions are not asked of what the client is understanding. Good communication skills are always a benefit at this stage.

The front line personnel that actually bang away at the keyboards usually think of business processes in terms of their interaction with their current systems. If their experiences can be interpreted and converted into industry standard terms and documented—flow charts—a starting point has been established that can be used to map the

current processes to the particular menus, reports, concurrent programs, etc., that Oracle uses to complete these processes.

The documentation of business process steps whether it be flow charts, task lists, process diagrams, etc. also provide the benefit of overcoming any lingering differences in terminology that might be left over from step one. The review of these with multiple personnel will also provide a means by which to capture any missing steps that may be integral to the completion of the processes.

It is essential here that the employees begin to understand that they are performing a business function and not just “working through a stack of paper.” The users that begin to understand how their interaction with the system affects the other modules—e.g. Order Management affects Inventory and Purchasing—these users can play a key role in assisting with the internal acceptance and troubleshooting of the implementation.

Avoid Becoming Overwhelmed

Normally, the employees that actually hit the keys, not the management types, are not interested in learning “how” the technology functions, they are more concerned with the steps involved to “do their job.” In other words, this phase of an implementation is best approached from a task-oriented perspective. The key users identified in the previous step can assist in the functional transfer of knowledge and help “interpret” Oracle in terms that are understood by company personnel. An example explained in terms of a company process has a much greater learning affect than sample data in the Vision database displaying what the client sees as meaningless data.

It is very easy at this phase of an implementation for the task-oriented personnel to begin to get a sense that “the new system” is overwhelming. To address this, and to assist with personnel learning Oracle, the business process flow charts that were created in previous steps and reviewed by company personnel can aid as a tool. The flow chart steps for the specific task that is needing to be performed by these employees—e.g. process an Order to Pick Release—can be associated with the specific menu, report, concurrent program, etc. that Oracle will use to complete this process.

What this accomplishes is that it ties the business process and workflow to the particular steps that the employee will be performing in Oracle. In other words, the employees begin to gain a sense of how their jobs will be transformed once the implementation has been completed. Human nature tends to take the worst-case scenario if some of the components are unknown. If employees can be given a picture of what life will be like post implementation, a stake has been placed into the ground that can serve as an objective to work toward—i.e. These are the processes that will be performed; do they get the job done? What additional information is needed to complete these particular processes? This is the stage at which an understanding of the true business process “exceptions” can be gathered.

An example of the flow diagram mapped to Oracle processes follows:

{insert graphic}

Elevate Key Users

For the consultant, it is hard to fight a political battle; and most often best avoided. Often there are users within an organization that have, to use an industry standard term, “followed the Peter Principle.” During an implementation there are also other users that grasp the technology and begin to take ownership of the opportunities they see being presented by the Oracle software—better information, streamlined processing, and consolidation of workloads. Elevating these key users to become an integral part of the implementation and cutover will greatly benefit the company in easing the bumps during the transitional period if the politics of elevating these users can be avoided. These users are great allies in identifying problems in the early stages during the implementation and cutover.

A basic, and vital, role that these individuals can play is that of an interpreter. As their understanding of Oracle increases and begins to solidify in terms of how the company processes will be performed, this understanding can be used to translate the dialog between company personnel and consultants in terms of refining how the Oracle software configuration will impact the use and user interaction with the system. This can include anything from

report grouping rules to flex field values available for user selection to what menus user responsibilities have access to. These users can also be positioned to assume a key role in the functional maintenance and troubleshooting of system during and well after cutover.

Transfer of Knowledge and Maintenance of the System

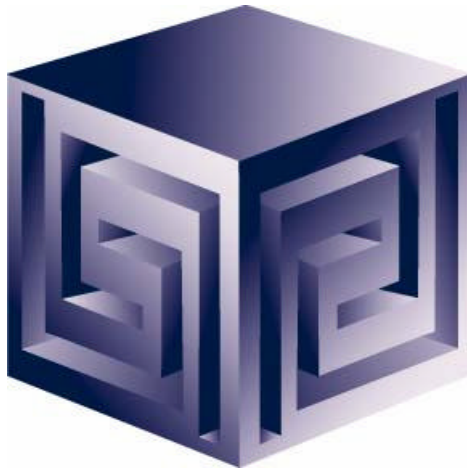
The process involved in maintaining the Oracle e-Commerce gateway and the interface with Oracle Order Management often fall outside the normal business processes in that it deals with standards such as ASC X12, EDIFACT, or other rules established by the various standards bodies. Unfortunately, these areas can cause a good number of issues in debugging and maintaining a system as it matures. Having employees and resources available that are familiar with the external standards that are being used as well as how they relate to the business process will avoid a good number of problems that if not identified in their early stages, reach a point where they begin to compound themselves.

A solid understanding of the processes used to move orders through the gateway, into the interface tables, and on to the generation of orders is paramount to maintaining throughput and not building a backlog of problems. The outline of an EDI processed order from EDI Translator to Order Management order generation follows:

{insert graphic}

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VlamiS Software Solutions, Inc.

- **Founded in 1992 in Kansas City, Missouri**
- **A Member of Oracle Partner Program since 1995 along with various Oracle Beta Programs**
- **Designs and implements databases/data marts/data warehouses using RDBMS and Multidimensional tools**
- **Specializes in Data Transformation, Data Warehousing, Business Intelligence, Oracle Financials and Applications Development**
- **Founder Dan VlamiS is former developer at Oracle-Waltham office for Sales Analyzer Application**
- **Oracle Certified Solutions Provider**





Business Case

The successful OM and e-Commerce Gateway implementation is filled with many challenges, but few are true technology issues. How you overcome the challenges determines how much of the technology is adopted. Process management affects the final outcomes and which cultural changes evolve into end-user acceptance.



Agenda

- **Business objectives for implementation**
- **Typical company profile**
- **Company internal environments**
- **Obstacles to integration of new technology**
- **Strategies for overcoming obstacles**
- **Results of implementing the strategies**
- **Questions**



Business Objectives

Implementing an e-Commerce (EDI) gateway to automate and streamline order entry processes presents some unique challenges for smaller mid-market companies trying to adopt the latest technologies. There are some large benefits, however, which are usually in the form of eliminating the duplication of effort between order entry and shipping/warehousing personnel which can ease the workload in growing and dynamic companies.



Company Profile

- **Small-medium, < \$500 million revenue**
- **Multi-phased implementation**
- **Small group of key decision makers**
- **Key decision makers accessible**
- **Small number of large customers**
- **Large number of small customers**
- **Usually a particular “niche” that gives the company a market edge**



Internal Environment

- **Key decision makers limited understanding of technology**
- **Lack of a centralized plan—every department head has their own agenda**
- **“Customized” business processes—many individuals doing the same thing differently**
- **Limited or “home grown” IT resources**
- **Limited understanding of interdepartmental information exchanges & why they happen**



Internal Environment

This does not indicate that the company is bad, or doing the wrong things; it is merely an indication of a company being focused on its core functionality and not on technology (i.e. placing no value on what it perceives as non-productive overhead). This does, however, present some unique challenges in integrating new technology into the organization.



Internal Obstacles

- **The language barrier**
- **Understanding of company's industry and it's standard practices**
- **Carrying forward bad habits: "Because we've always done it that way" is not justification for implementation "customizations"**
- **Realization by company personnel that there will be restructuring/elimination of positions**
- **Staying Current With Patch Releases**



Internal Obstacles

- **Task/routine oriented**
- **Experience, job perspectives in the form of “punch lists”**
- **Show me WHAT to do NOT how to do it**
- **The system “told us” what to do, how is this one going to tell us that?**
- **Production focused; lack of desire and initiative to learn new software**



Preferred Skills

- **Understanding of the business processes**
- **Functional understanding of the current technology and configurations**
- **Understanding of industry standards in regards to the business processes**
- **Understanding of data translation methodology**
- **Functional understanding of customer's processes**



Assumed Configuration

- **ec-gateway Trading Partners are properly configured and linking to AR Customers**
- **Trading Partner details are configured for the correct transactions and have correct maps associated with the transactions**
- **Translator is configured and pulling orders**
- **All of the Translator maps are mapped correctly to the ec-gateway records**
- **OM interface and OM configuration can pass and accept information passed from ec-gateway**

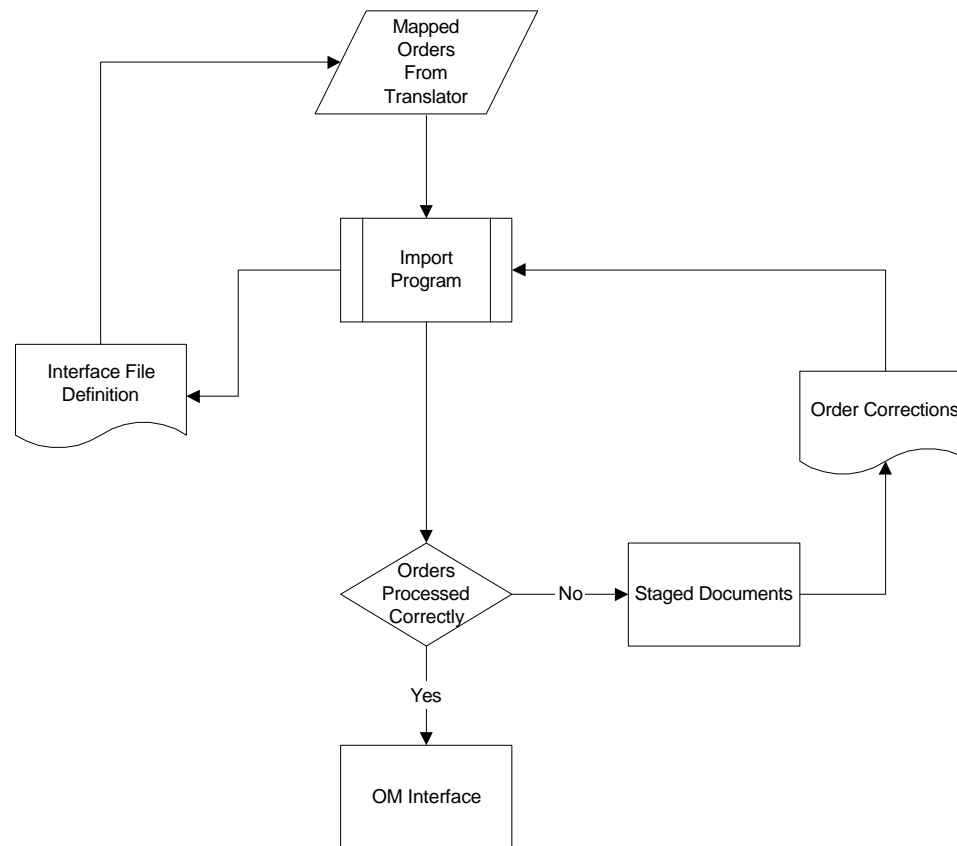


Beginning With The Users

Through a series of interviews with user community, engage them in documenting their business processes in terms of flow diagrams

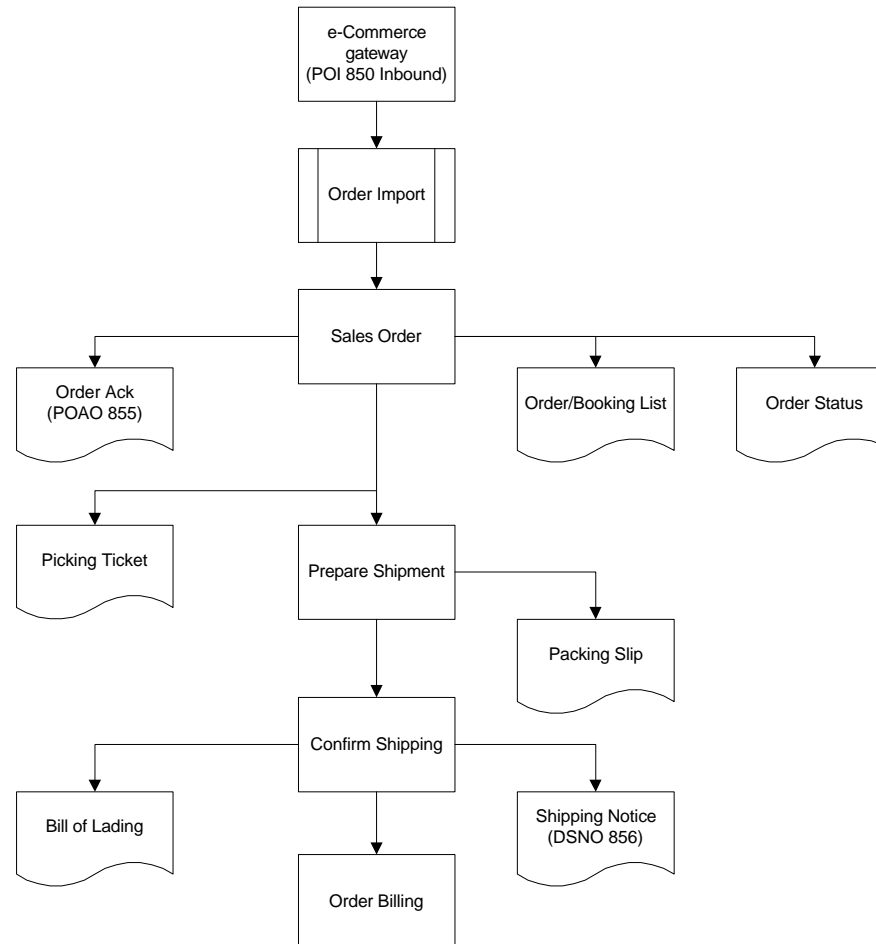


E-Comm Transaction Processing





OM Transaction Processing





Linking Processes To Oracle

How do you get users to think of the business processes in terms of software?



Linking Processes To Oracle

You don't!
Why?



Linking Processes To Oracle

- **The user community was not hired to be technology workers; this is not where their value add to the organization is**
- **How the technology and software function is the job of the IT staff and consultants**
- **How the warehouse functions is the job of the warehouse personnel**
- **What if the IT staff was asked to go move boxes around in the warehouse as part of their jobs?**



Linking Processes To Oracle

Therefore, the majority of the user community only relate to the software in terms of the steps needed to perform their jobs.



Linking Processes To Oracle

The users need to be shown where to go to perform specific tasks in the software. After having completed diagramming the business processes and explaining their involvement, it is easy to link a software function with their tasks by limiting their exposure to the particular area of the software they will be using—but only in terms of where they interact with the software to complete a business processes.

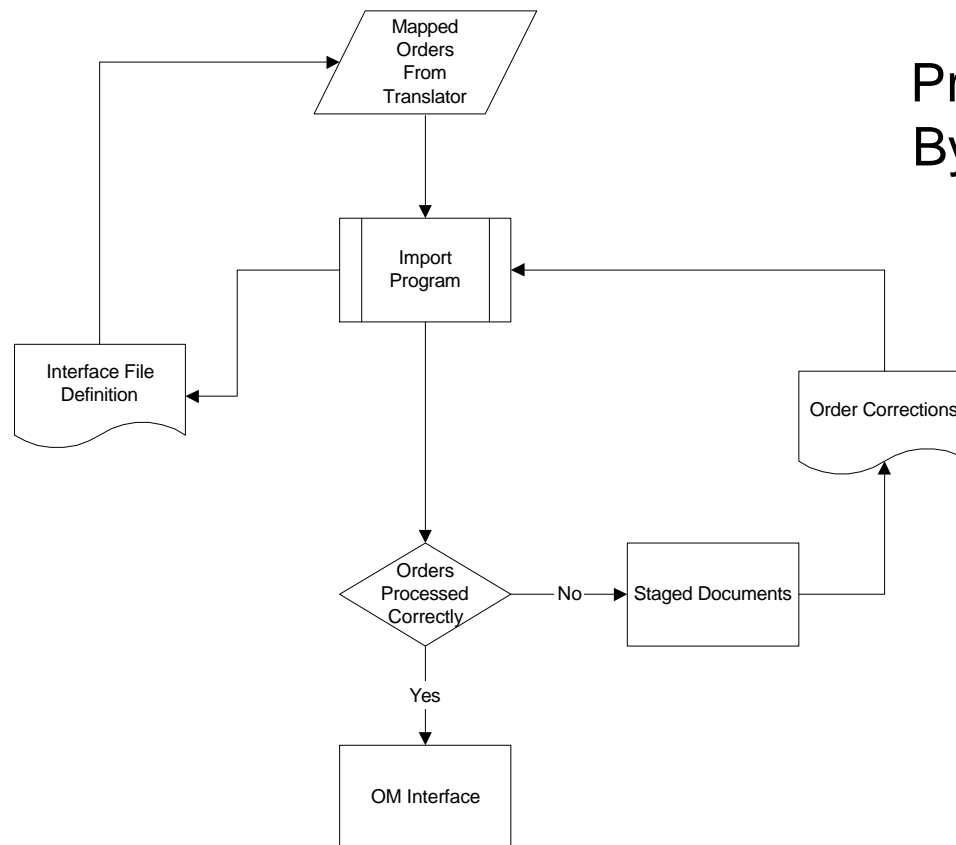


Linking Processes To Oracle

The objective is to give the users a sense of how their jobs will change and what the day-to-day routines will be once the software is functional. This will take away apprehension and users will begin to accept the system as inevitable. If accepted at an early state, much more of the technology will be adopted and post-implementation “trauma” is minimized.



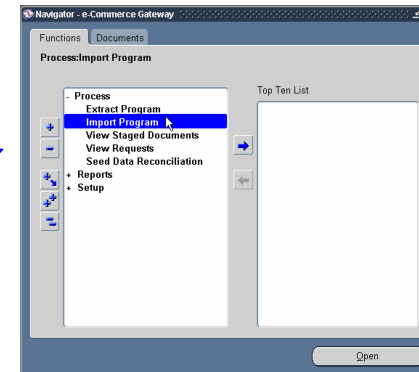
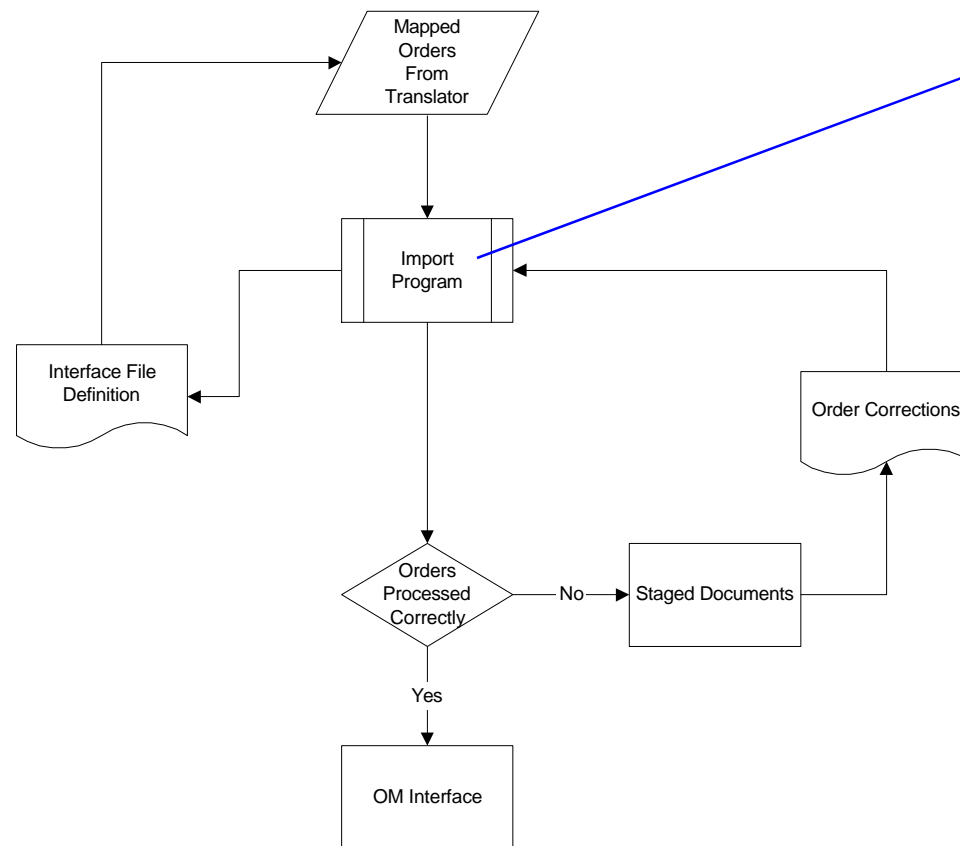
Linking Processes To Oracle



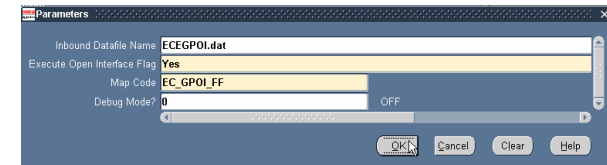
Process Flow Diagramed
By Interviews With Users



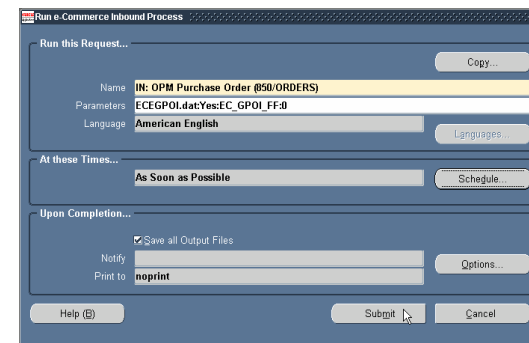
Linking Processes To Oracle



Step 1



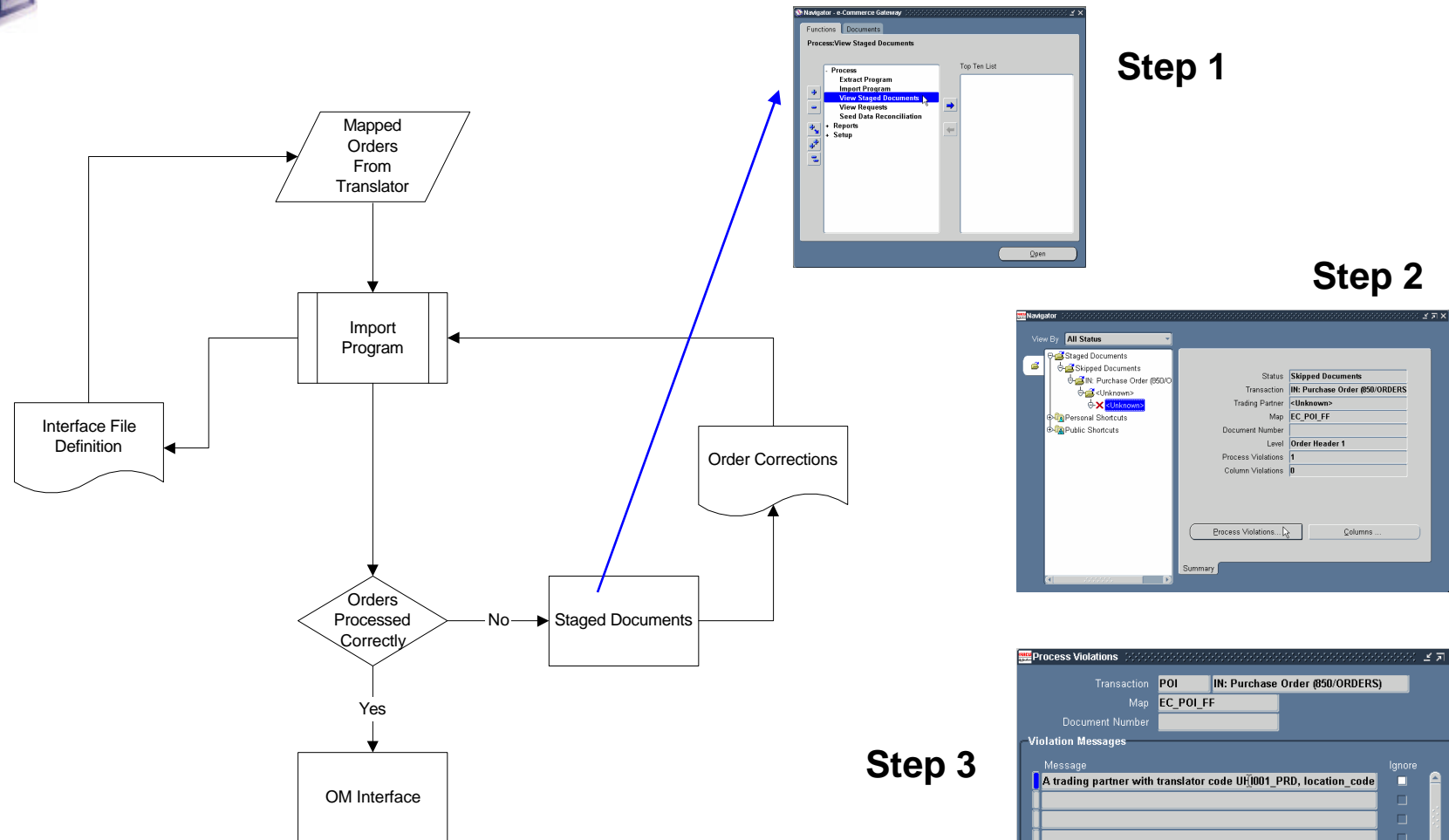
Step 2



Step 3

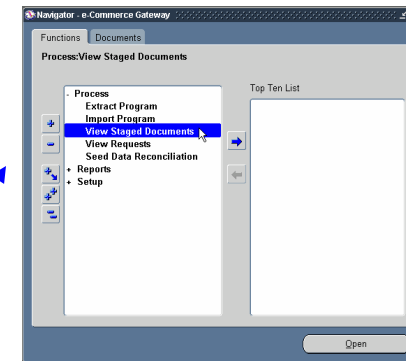
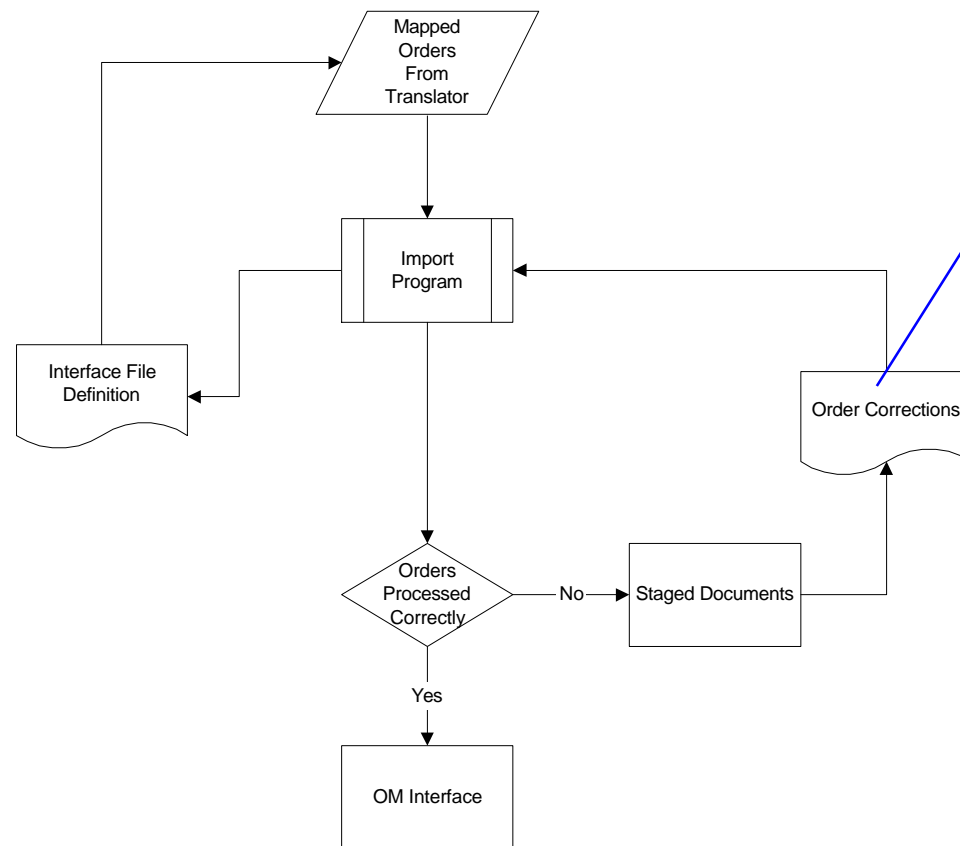


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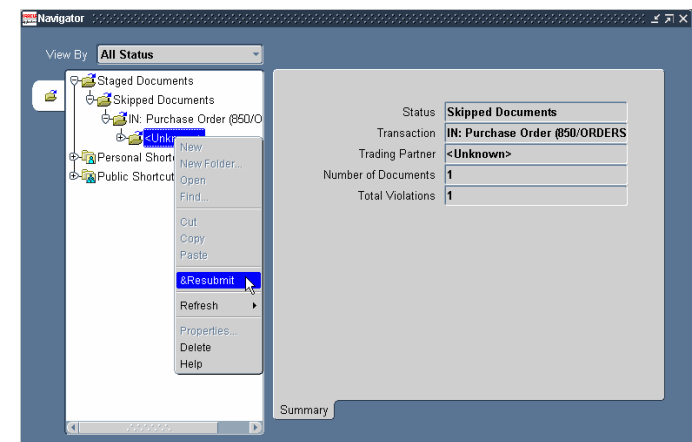




Linking Processes To Oracle



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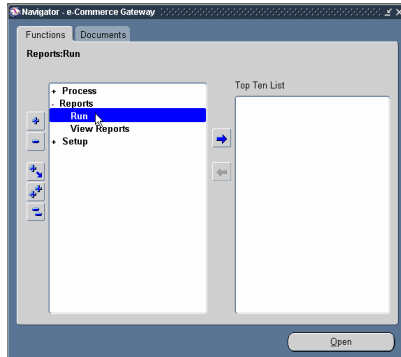


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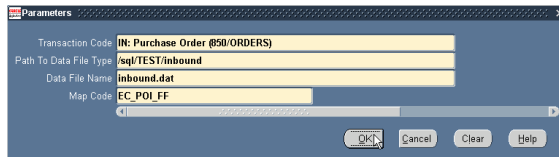


Linking Processes To Oracle

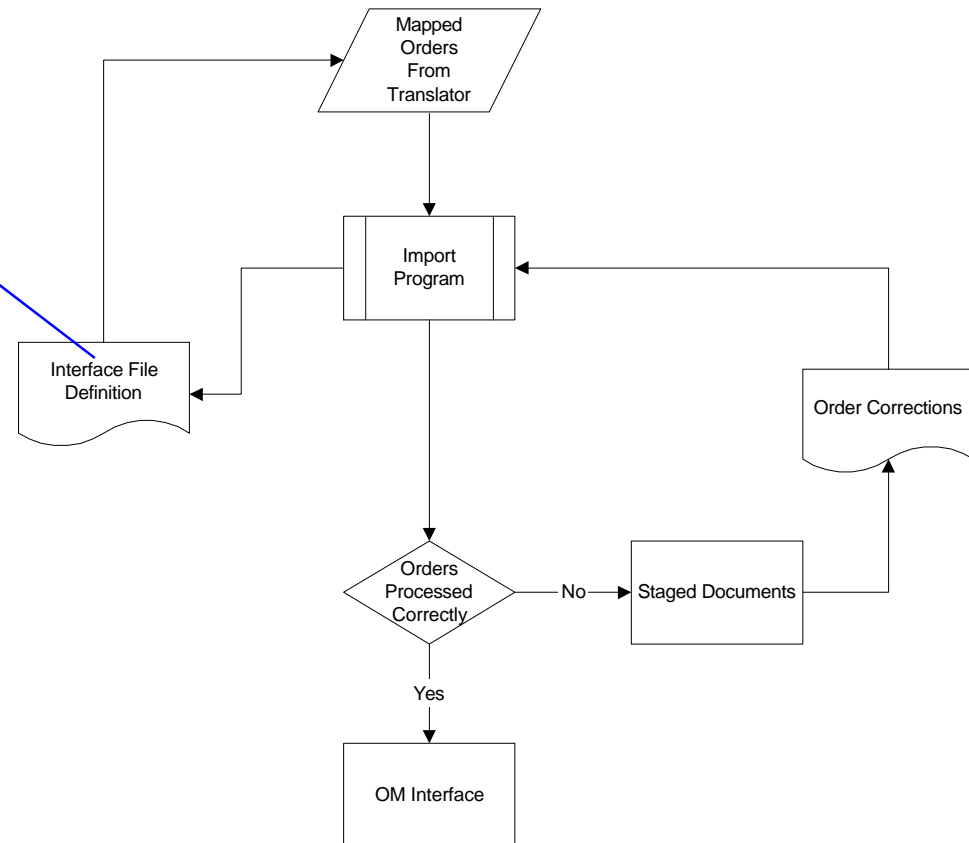
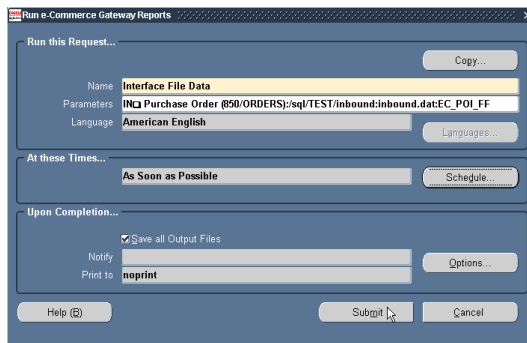
Step 1



Step 2



Step 3





Benefits

- **Focus on process not on technology**
- **Assist with user acceptability by focusing on small portions of implementation related to the specifics of their jobs**
- **Eliminate apprehension about “new system” by giving users a look at what’s to come**
- **Facilitates user training by giving them “exposure” to the system, and starts users thinking of using the software in terms of getting their jobs done**
- **Help identify overlooked processes as consultants and users work through process diagrams**
- **Having fleshed out the processes with the users, there is a common basis for future communications**



Conclusion

- **The success of an implementation can be attributed to:**
 - **Support from Executive level**
 - **Consultants with in-depth knowledge of the software as well as having a working understanding of industry business practices**
 - **Creative solutions quickly applied as problems arise**
 - **Elevating key users to function as facilitators throughout the implementation and assisting with a transfer of knowledge to all levels of user**



A Perfect World?

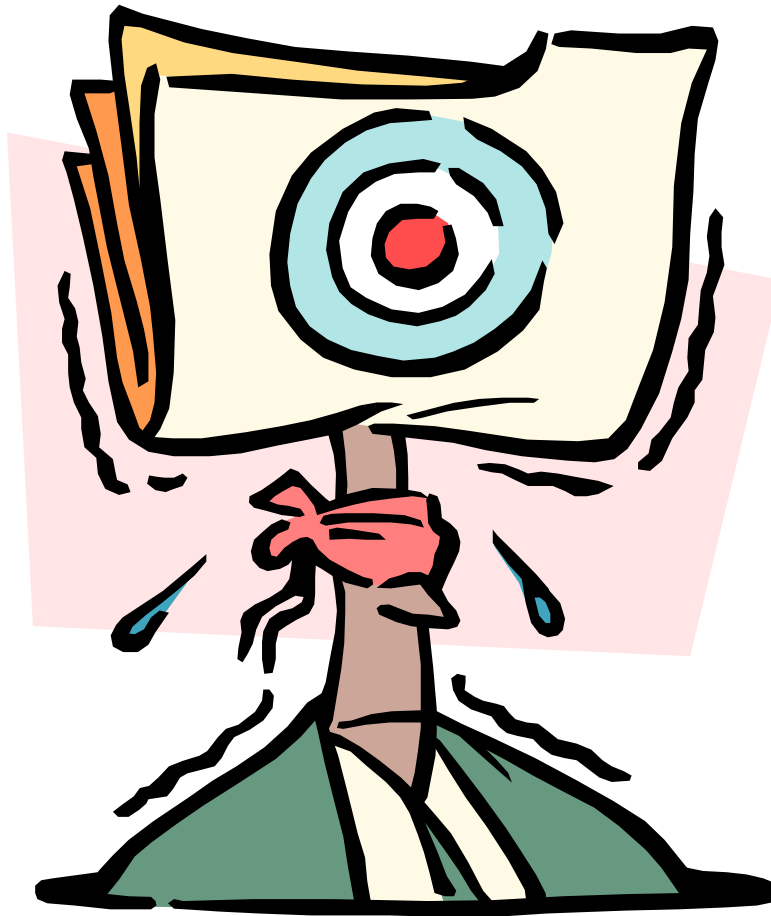
No implementation is without problems. But there's no problem that can't be effectively dealt with. A favorite question asked of "those" individuals



Who Knows!

Where do you think we'd be if we had as many excuses for making progress as we do for our lack of it?

QUESTIONS?

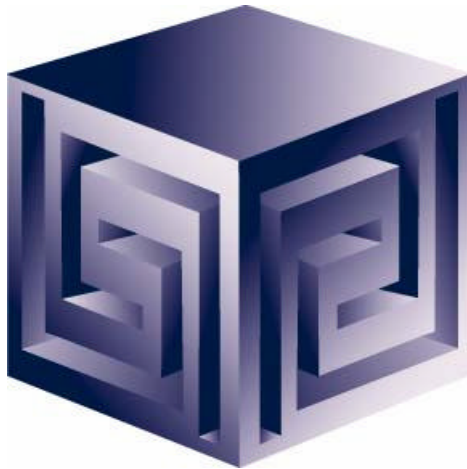


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