

Editors Note

Welcome to our second edition of *embraceTALK*. This edition focuses on current and new developments within Embrace. We *TALK* to Ian Foster, who gives us an in-depth look at what happens behind the scenes in the ACS-Embrace Development Division. This team keeps abreast of technology trends and ensures that your Embrace business solution continues to meet your needs.

Our special focus module for this edition is "Workflow", which comprises a flexible and customisable workflow engine for modelling business processes. This module has been fully integrated into Embrace.

We received a positive response to our Embrace User Tips and FAQ's. Thank you for that and for your feedback. Your *TALK* will ensure that User Tips and FAQ's be included in all future editions of *embraceTALK*. This edition *TALKs* about taking full advantage of "shortcuts" and how to make them work for you.

Talking of which, our Embrace Development Team would never dream of taking any shortcuts. Their planning, attention to detail and quality assurance, ensures that Embrace is leading edge and best of breed. Another "Foster" best sums this up: "Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skilful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives." Willa A. Foster

Our case study bears further testimony to this "quality" as we embrace Agrinet's core focus areas. Read about how tight controls and access to information in Embrace has enabled Agrinet to grow sales without growing costs.

With less than 7 weeks to go before 2011 springs upon us, we reflect on 2010, which has been a busy and challenging year for "Team Embrace". We have welcomed new clients to our ACS-Embrace family and had our fair share of movers and shakers within the company.

Enough *TALK* from me.....enjoy the read...



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Left: Key members of the Development Team

From the desk of our Development Director

Whilst surfing the web, looking for a suitable introduction, I found this anonymous quote -

"Software, good software, is not built by individuals. It is built by teams. To do this, the teams must possess shared values, principles, and practices",

which I believe is an apt description of the development team at ACS, whose singular role is to manage, maintain and develop ACS-Embrace.

Our team is made up of Development Managers, System Analysts, Analyst Programmers and Quality Control specialists, with a commitment to adhering to our strict development standards. They focus a collective, creative effort to ensure that our product development remains relevant, including drafting the strategic development plans, engaging with customers, addressing new legislative requirements and implementing appropriate and cost-effective technologies.

This one team is both the custodian of the existing ACS-Embrace versions, and the visionaries for all future developments. Our constant challenge is to find a balance between the ongoing development of new features and the maintenance of existing versions.

Input to the development process comes from a multitude of sources:

- monitoring software industry trends
- being aware of changing business practises
- feedback from other departments within ACS
- engaging with our existing clients

Add to that technology changes and legislative changes, it becomes quite clear that our development process occurs in an ever-changing environment.

All of these inputs, identifying specific modules and functionality within ACS-Embrace that will be decided or enhanced, impact the development plan. The development team expands this plan, adding flesh to the bones, in order to complete requirement specifications so that they can be brought to life. The creative process has begun, the programmers start, and the next version is on its way.

But, as Seymour Cray, the father of supercomputers said, *"The trouble with programmers is that you can never tell what a programmer is doing until it's too late"*, so, at ACS, we conduct ongoing internal review sessions, to ensure we remain on track, and implement design changes where appropriate.

Individual programs come together to form a new module, ready for the first phase of alpha testing. Again, the entire ACS team gets involved in this process, testament to the commitment of the whole company to the ongoing development of the ACS-Embrace product. Our passion and dedication to ACS-Embrace is tangible, the commitment unquestionable, evident throughout the development cycle.

Major versions are released every 18 – 24 months, and are typified by some significant new developments, either new modules or major enhancements to existing modules. It is evident that there is a cyclical nature to new releases, where one version will contain significant new business functionality and the following version has more of a technological bias, such as faxing or web services.

The software industry's move towards more environmentally friendly, "green" software has also not passed us by, resulting in our evolution from traditional manuals to an extensive on-line repository of help and documentation. The longer-term strategic development objectives lay a foundation for the products' continued growth, and we believe that the user forums will allow us to keep everyone up to date with relevant information in this regard.

As a software development team, we operate in an extremely fluid environment. We face constantly changing technologies, changing business environments, and diverse customer requirements. ACS-Embrace has evolved over the past 25 years, built from the ground up, inspired by a team who believed in the need for a cost effective, best of breed business application, and 25 years later, we continue to evolve, develop and deliver beyond solutions, to carry us all forward, for another 25 years and beyond.

Ian Foster - Development Director

Embrace 13.0 Highlights?

Workflow

- Control flow of Embrace transactions
- User defined workflows
- User defined teams
- User defined notifications

Output Management

- Store CSV, PDF, XML & raw text
- User defined directory structure
- Automatic archival & email options
- Automatic PDF file generation

Purchase Limit Checking

- Buyer limit checking for all Purchases
- Buyer limit authorisation to allow buyer overspending
- Buyer limits per period

Supplier Claims

- Non-conformance documents raised during goods receiving for items that are damaged, oversupplied or incorrectly supplied
- Return to supplier program facilitates returns to supplier against a non-conformance document
- Supplier claim is raised for settlement

Fixed Asset Count System

- Counts by site, department, location & asset type
- Capture of counted assets
- Option to scan bar-coded assets
- Count query processing

Fixed Asset Manager

- Count Queries
- Internal Moves
- Inbound Transfers
- Outbound Transfers
- Disposals

Rental Contracts Manager

- Creation of contracts
- Allocation of rental articles
- Despatch of rental articles
- Swap of rental articles
- Return of rental articles
- Debrief of Rental Articles
- Invoicing

Special Feature - New Module

Workflow Module

The Embrace workflow system is designed to allow control over the activities associated with a variety of business processes within an organisation. User-defined workflow processes are linked to specific business processes, where the status of the linked workflow process is used to monitor and affect the options available within Embrace applications. An example is the Purchase Order Entry program, where the conversion of a purchase requisition into a purchase order can be controlled by the status of a user-defined approval process.

Examples of standard workflow-enabled business activities within Embrace include Purchase Requisition conversions, Fixed Assets Management and Workshop Job relocations. The flow of these activities can all be controlled, based on user-defined rules and logic.

Users are grouped into user-defined teams, with each team member being allocated specific roles within the team. Workflow tasks are assigned to a particular role-player within a team, with designated due dates.

Workflow Designer

The Workflow Designer is used to define specific workflow processes. Workflow processes are groups of related workflow steps that are joined to define a particular process flow. The logical rules to determine the flow are defined within the designer. With the flexibility of allocating branch specific teams, a common workflow process can be defined for use across all branches, ensuring that branch specific team members are tasked and notified accordingly.

Workflow Service

The workflow system continually monitors the assigned workflow tasks in the background, sending out reminders and escalation notifications to ensure users take timely action.

The system caters for user defined notifications to be sent via email, Embrace mail and SMS. Furthermore, supervisors and team leaders are able to monitor the tasks and activities that have been initiated for their colleagues and sub-ordinates, and intervene if necessary, to ensure that business continuity is not affected.

Workflow Viewer

The Workflow Viewer allows users to view the status and progression of a specific transaction's workflow process. Users are able to drill into the associated workflow tasks, to both view and manage the associated tasks. A history of all previous actions taken during the workflow process, by other team members is readily available. Users are also able to drill directly into the underlying Embrace application in order to view and update the source transactions.

Workflow Manager

The Workflow Manager presents users with a centralised point of access into the workflow system, with the facility to navigate into the underlying transactions and workflow viewer. This allows the users to manage tasks, monitor interactions and provides insight to the individual workflow processes. Supervisors too, are able to manage tasks and monitor the progress of subordinates' workflow tasks.

Itm	Workflow	Trigger	Team	Roleplayer	Det
1	Requisition Approval				
2	Requisition Approval Required	Requisition Captured			
3	Confirm Asset Requirement	Fixed Asset Order	Originator	Financial Director	
4	Source Asset	Fixed Asset Order	PURA Purchasing Approval	Fixed Asset Buyer	
5	Approve Asset Requisition	Source Confirmed		Previous	
6	Head Office Approval	Fixed Asset Order > 20000	PURH Head Office Approval	Managing Director	
7	Order Notification	Order Confirmed	PUR Purchasing	Buyer	
8	Operations Dept Approval	Requisition for Ops	PURA Purchasing Approval	Purchase Auth - OPS	
9	Divisional Approval Ops	Value > 5000	DIVA Divisional Approval	Purchase Auth - OPS	
10	Head Office Approval	Value > 10000	PURH Head Office Approval	Managing Director	
11	Finance Dept Approval	Requisitions for Finance	PURA Purchasing Approval	Purchase Auth - FIN	
12	Divisional Approval Fin	Value > 5000	DIVA Divisional Approval	Purchase Auth - FIN	
13	Head Office Approval	Value > 10000	PURH Head Office Approval	Managing Director	
14	R&D Dept Approval	Requisitions for R&D	PURA Purchasing Approval	Purchase Auth - R&D	
15	Divisional Approval R&D	Value > 5000	DIVA Divisional Approval	Purchase Auth - R&D	
16	Head Office Approval	Value > 10000	PURH Head Office Approval	Managing Director	

ACS embraces Agrinet's core focus areas



Agrinet is a wholesale distributor of industrial, agricultural and retail products in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their direct involvement with more than 500 agricultural retail outlets in South Africa, has established the company as a leading supplier.

The Company operates from its head office in Samrand, Gauteng and has warehouses in Samrand and in Bellville, in the Western Cape. Scheduled deliveries on their fleet of trucks are done on a daily or weekly basis to almost every town and city in the country.

"Agrinet implemented the ACS-Embrace business solution over 13 years ago. Our decision then was based on price; functionality; customer service and support; system flexibility and agility; ease of use; ease of access to data and reports," says Jaco Kriel, Financial Director at Agrinet.

"Five years ago, we moved premises from Isando to Samrand. Our new Warehouse has more than doubled in size and stockholding and yet our cost of warehousing has remained the same as five years ago. With Embrace, we run a paperless system and have full visibility of the entire process. We are able to monitor every transaction through its various stages, from receiving to when the goods leave the warehouse," added Callie Herbst, Logistics Manager.

"Since using Embrace with RF Scanners, we have been able to double the number of "picks" per day and eliminate costly mistakes. We have also eliminated the need for nightshift pickers. We do up to 12,000 transactions per day and can load in excess of 140 tons per night. Picker performance is key. It has a ripple effect throughout the entire business. We are able to measure picker performance and productivity on Embrace and pay incentives accordingly. The earlier the picks for the day are complete, the earlier the trucks can be loaded and the sooner the goods can be delivered.

We also use JIT (Just-In-Time) Picking, within Embrace. This has led to higher productivity and improved quality of service to clients. It enables us to run a warehouse that is more efficient with space, resources and capital. Binning and Picking rules are defined on the system. With system directed put away, based on product movement, only 15% of transactions come from racking high up. The lowest, closest product is always picked first.

Picks are automated, so that if a customer or courier is waiting to collect an order, theirs will be prioritised and be the next order picked.

Foodstuff is stored in a separate area in the warehouse. The integrated batch/lot control module in Embrace ensures that products are picked according to their lowest and earliest expiry dates.

We have over 40,000 bins and carry in excess of R120 million of stock.

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FAQ (Frequently Asked Question)

Q How can I quickly find the item I am looking for in an Embrace grid without scrolling through the entire grid?

A Firstly, ensure that the whole grid is loaded - a quick way to achieve this is to press the **End** key on your keyboard. Then press your function key at the top of your keyboard marked **F9**, put in a word or part of a word you expect to be present in the item you are looking for and press the **Find Next** button. You may keep pressing the **F3** function key to repeat the search for the next occurrence. *Note* that if you press **F3** up front and if there are no previous search criteria, it will also prompt you to enter the search criteria.

Q Is there a way I can see who else is logged in on the system and can I communicate with them through Embrace?

A Yes, anyone can enquire on the active users through the **Embrace Control Panel**. The easiest way is to press your function key at the top of your keyboard marked **F7**. This feature is available from anywhere in Embrace so long as you are logged in and your *hour glass* is not active. Once you have found the user you are looking for, you can double click on the user to zoom in and then select from the buttons at the top of the popup window to send instant messages or mail. You will find more information on the users by selecting the **Toggle** button on the main grid. Also, try cycling through the tabs at the top of the window for other useful information.

Embrace User Tips

Function Keys are used

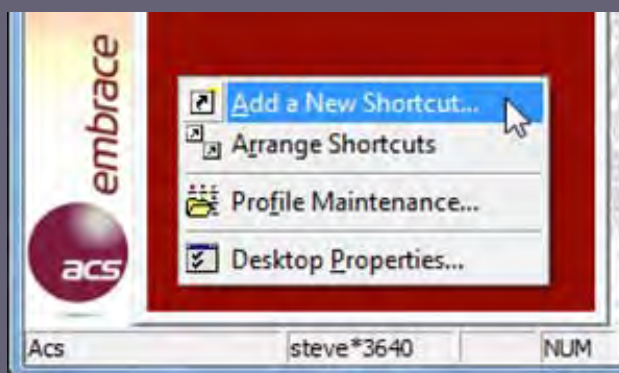
Creating your own **Shortcuts** in Embrace is simple and can greatly improve your ability to access frequently used enquiries and reports quickly. Best of all you can set them up yourself so you don't have to wait for your Help Desk to do it for you! Many users have only found the Embrace *red curtain* an irritation up to now, but once you have discovered its real purpose, you will love it!

To add shortcuts, you can select the **Options** menu item at the top of the Embrace Desktop and choose **Add a New Shortcut...** or place your mouse cursor on the bottom half of the left hand vertical logo bar on the Embrace Desktop to make the *red curtain* appear and then right click on the *red curtain* and select **Add a New Shortcut...**

Once you have selected **Add a New Shortcut...**, a popup window will appear and you can then select the **Browse Menu** button and traverse the menu tree until you find the enquiry or report you wish to add as a shortcut.

Once you have created all your shortcuts, you can arrange them by dragging around the *red curtain* or right click on the *red curtain* and select **Arrange Shortcuts**.

But - if you still find the *red curtain* an irritation, just right click on the Embrace logo bar on the left side of the Embrace Desktop and select **Disable Shortcut Area**.



Academy TALK

In October, the Academy trained 58 delegates on 11 tailored Embrace courses in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. We look forward to tailoring a course to meet your company's training requirements. Please, TALK to us.

Do you know how to write your own reports, using the Embrace Report Writer? The Academy runs a 2-day Beginner's and 3-day Intermediate "Report Writer" course. Book your place now. You will learn how to access the information you need, in the format that you want. The next Beginner's Report Writer course is scheduled for the 23rd and 24th November 2010. Special course fees are on offer. "Enrol 3 delegates and only pay for 2". Don't delay, Book your place today!

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Last Word

"The difference between failure and success is doing a thing nearly right and doing a thing exactly right."

Edward Simmons

embraceTALK

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Perpetual stock takes are done on Embrace and because of the tight system controls, our shrinkage is well below acceptable norms."

Managing the costs associated with inventory management is one of the greatest challenges for Agrinet. "The Company maintains nearly 20,000 line items," adds Callie. "These products are sourced both locally and abroad. We have longer lead times for overseas orders and shipping, so we need to ensure safety stock levels. Visibility into stock is essential.

The entire company is run on our 241 user, fully integrated, on-line, real-time Embrace business solution, including a full point-of-sale system in our retail outlets and the service and maintenance module in our workshops, where warranties and full service history per engine are tracked.

Team Embrace TALK

It was difficult for the editorial team to know how far back to go when launching this new section. We decided to include news about our team that occurred in the last 12 months.

We say farewell to **Ann Delaney**, who retired from ACS in August. In the last 10 years, Ann played an important role in the Embrace R&D Division, where she became known as "Mrs Report Writer". Ann will be greatly missed, not only for her technical contribution but also for her caring personality and wholehearted involvement in the life of ACS. We wish her a well deserved rest and much blessed family time in her retirement.

We welcome back **Christine Louw** to the ACS-Embrace fold after an absence of 18 years. Christine was one of the original developers of Embrace, specialising in the Sales Module and now, after gaining a lot of experience in the IT industry, she returns to contribute, once again, with fresh perspective, to our great, quality product. Christine joins our Projects Division as Solutions Architect.



Embrace enables us to receive and process thousands of orders per day with maximum speed and efficiency. 70% of all transactions, invoicing and price updates are done electronically. This means fast and accurate flow of information at a fraction of the cost.

System uptime is critical to our business. In the 13.5 years that Agrinet has been running on Embrace, we have experienced 99.9% uptime.

Embrace has enabled our company to grow sales without growing costs. We're very happy with the product, the support, and the ongoing development. The fact that we've been with ACS-Embrace as long as we have, says a lot. The software has evolved alongside Agrinet and continues to give us the sophistication and customisation capabilities we need to grow our business, today and tomorrow."

We also welcome to the team, **Steven Rootman**, who joined the Development Division as an Analyst Programmer in September. Steven has 11 years Universe experience in the Financial Services sector. We wish him a speedy transition to the ACS-Embrace technologies.



Nina Johnson, our Quality Control Manager, left ACS in November last year to become a lady of leisure in Kazakhstan, where her husband is working as a contractor. She served ACS with loyalty and dedication for 15 years, making a huge contribution to the documentation and overall quality of the product. We wish Nina all the very best in her new home.

In February, **Joyce Graham** moved from the Projects Division, where she served as the Business Services Manager for the last 18 years, to take up the position in R&D as Quality Control Manager.

Congratulations to **Debbie De Wit** who has taken over from Joyce as the Business Services Manager.



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