

# Meeting Minutes

The Regular quarterly meeting of the VMUG was called to order at 10:02 a.m. on Friday, May 10<sup>th</sup> at Impecca Restaurant located in Roselle, Illinois. Mark Olbrantz and Calvin Dekker served as moderators for addressing opening business.

Members were reminded to complete the meeting surveys before the end of the day, with special note being made regarding the request for topics. Topic ideas for August Meeting MRP, Scheduling, Back-flushing labor, interests in updated hardware requirements for Epicor 9.05 and beyond (fusion IO drive cards, solid state drives), highlights from Epicor Insights Conference, and Kevin Gallagher offered to have a presentation by Technical support regarding requirements. Calvin pointed out it's not necessary to wait for 9.05 to switch to solid state drives, benefits are realized immediately.

Kevin Gallagher shared that Epicor is in the process of forming a direct relationship with Fusion IO to hopefully bring down cost (anticipate in next quarter). A comment was made that if members are looking at upgrading to SSD, they should look at 6 GB transfer speeds for the benefits related to it.

Audience question: Any suggestions for separate buildings? Responses included: Fiber, Terminal Server or virtual APP (like a Citrix App). Hyper V (free, just need a remote license).

Investigating different data collection devices? Any interest in someone from supply chain come out (Steven Giralidi) to share information – i.e. tablet environment, etc. Beyond barcode scanning. Show how it works, see some of the devices live.

Question was asked regarding MES licensing. Used to be that you could take full license and use as MES. Running into concurrency issues, consider web apps? Various user licenses discussion for topic possible at future meetings. Additional topic ideas included:

- Month End close process
- MRP
- Oncor at Swiss Tek
- Back Flush Labor
- Scheduling
- Data collection machines
- Back Flush Labor
- Epicor 9 hardware requirements
- Epicor Tech topic
- License types
- Evaluating employee efficiency and custom reports to do so (Mark Olbrantz) other half of topic custom data collection time tracking piece for capturing labor (don't use MES). Custom job batch collection
- Maintenance Module 9.05
- Next agenda – build in an open discussion time

A status update was provided regarding the VMUG treasury. Presently applying for an EIN and will then have W9 available, soon. When available will attach a W9 with next meeting minutes, possibly create link on website.

Calvin Dekker shared information on grant funded opportunity for manufacturing companies for sustainable energy, lean and green initiative. Federally funded.

Mark Olbrantz asked if there were any specific request for Insights to bring back for next meeting. He also recommended that if attending Insights to attend the Meet your Team Meeting and the Road to Meeting (MES handouts or contact)

Request was made for a Published list price of modules (i.e. on EpicWeb).

Audience question whether Progress will be gone with Epicor 10? Kevin – Microsoft based platform? Will there will be a mechanism to convert from Progress to SQL?

The morning presentation consisted of discussion led by Pat Vanderlind from Midwest Metal Products regarding Vista/Vantage/Epicor Support Options. Talk a little about support comments and options. Pat commutes from Iowa for the meetings. Customer of Epicor since they were DCD and have stayed with software. Have really customized Vantage and have chosen presently to stay with Version 8. Have kept support in place more as insurance rather than jumping to next levels. With changes at Epicor, Maintenance has changed as well. Maintenance cost has jumped substantially. Need to determine whether cost, which now raises red flag, is of value. In their particular situation they are debating the support due to cost and perceived lack of use of common support value services (i.e. phone calls, upgrades, etc.). Wanted to open the door for discussion

Highlights of the discussion and audience questions follow:

*Difficult to get some of the tech support that Midwest may be looking for without incurring consultative fees. There are some options available. Using alternative means incurring full hourly rate.*

*Pat: currently extent of support calls is around 5 per year; maintenance is approximately \$40,000*

*Mark: Maintenance jumped from 15 to 20% of original cost.*

*There is a 3.8 or 3.9% annual cost increase that gets added by Epicor. Direction from Epicor management, they adamant about getting that set percentage and the per annum increase. In the past there may have been flexibility regarding the discounts – maintenance seen as a negotiating point. Now the perspective is those numbers are not as flexible (almost no flexibility).*

*Once a company is “mature” in terms of experience why can’t there be a support option for upgrades minimal support only?*

*Beyond 5 years out of maintenance Epicor will look at as a new sell opportunity.*

*Midwest perspective – making the decision to walk away from maintenance puts them in a perspective of having to repurchase in X years, which then puts Epicor on par with any other ERP as opposed to at least maintaining*

*Name any ERP software that isn’t requiring the maintenance...*

*Companies beginning to “do the math” – starting to look at the option of when they’re running steady do they simply drop the maintenance and repurchase Epicor or some other ERP*

*Not getting what we’re paying for, simply using as insurance.*

*Not getting support from support. Tickets being closed without actually being resolved – “taken care of in version XX”*

*There is a way to drop support on a module no longer using. License service deactivation. But if that module becomes a necessary aspect of another portion of the software, will have to either pay the back support or may be looked at as a new purchase.*

*Invoice for support 75 in advance – and one line. Request a more detailed listing of what's included in support. Make certain all modules are needed/used, etc.*

*Several requests for more than just a one line bill. Epicor will only do a one line invoice. Customer needs to ask for it. Be aware – bundled maintenance/modules. May not necessarily be able to reduce cost if the module/maintenance was bundled.*

*Support dollars no longer give the customers a voice. For example, in past users were able to give some guidance to what areas were addressed in upgrades; now it's marketing driven. Spending support dollars for upgrades that are not necessarily user driven.*

*Mark – recommend exercise your voice by insisting when appropriate on escalating*

*Reality is some companies using other consultants anyway, even with cost of consultant time, perceived benefit of faster answer, less loss of own time.*

*Contact CAM so they can engage and escalate on your behalf. They will be advocate.*

*Is there a plan in place, along the lines of an upgrade plan for an improvement in the level of support or a revamp of support?*

*What about forum for a simplified voting process. All Epicor user given a voice in*

*Not sure if it can be answered: What percent of support dollars go to upgrade/development / support.*

*Support issue in terms of the way the support team is incentivized (closed tickets).*

*Discussion regarding “one-off”. As with many things – the squeaky wheel gets fixed. Impacting your business? Did you get your CAM involved?*

*Understand that Epicor needs support dollars to continue to “keep the lights on” – Why can't Epicor have different levels? One answer is that they do – but it starts at the 18% and goes up from there to the 24/7 support.*

*On another note*

*IT – virtualized – nightly backups? Full or updates.*

*Disaster recovery preparation. Take data – upload here and copy offsite. VM is local. Trying to figure out a way to replicate offsite.*

*Option to have another server offsite (ie President's home) dedicated to put full copy nightly. i.e. server identical to production server.*

*Windows azure – spin up server on*

*Carbonite for business – looking at getting rid of tape backup.*

Following lunch, the centerpieces were raffled to give lucky attendees: Mark Olbrantz, Bob Parmley, Vickie Bender, Phil Collier and John Helgestad. The first afternoon session was an educational session by Bill Golis for database and appserver management for Progress. The presentation is appended to the end of the minutes. Additional highlights, discussion and questions follow:

- *Dump & Load & Truncating the BI Files would need to stop database.*

- *When you restart app server they have to be done in a certain order. Always want to stop app server before database. When starting up use the opposite order.*
- *App main first because the process and task feed off that operation (count 5 seconds as a rule of thumb) – by time icon flashes green*
- *Stop in order of longest to shortest name and start opposite*
- *Open windows task manager pro rv.exe running not fully shut down – any printing report left running, app server won't fully shut down.*
- *Database taking long – have you truncated BI? Flush or truncate (stop database before)*
- *Brief review of online backup vs. offline backup*
- *Mfgsys803400/db folder has the bi file*
- *In addition to backing up database, make sure you're backing up customizations, BAM, BAQ, etc. , openedge install – properties folder (that's the configuration specific for your server)*

The final education session for the meeting was on creating an Ultragrid and passing data to a report presented by Karen Schoenung of The Fisher Barton Group. The presentation is appended to the end of the minutes. Additional highlights, discussion and questions follow:

- *This process also works with bartender*
- *Could the same result be accomplished through a dashboard? Yes, this process is faster.*

Floor opened for discussion.

- *Does anyone use APM? Various discussion, relative to use. One company using very quickly, but not using attachments. APM saves document as tif.*
- *Discussion related to iPads. Has anyone used for plant floor collection? Capabilities are great – font size an issue and durability. As far as space/speed – one company running Vista on it just fine.*
- *Adding departments – what to consider when breaking departments into smaller settings.*

The meeting concluded at 3:15 p.m.

The next regular scheduled VMUG quarterly meeting is Friday, August 16<sup>th</sup>. Topics for presentation may be provided at any point via the VMUG website: <http://vantageusers.org/Contact.aspx>. A formal call for topics will be sent to membership in July.