SAP SPECIAL

CIOReview

The Navigator for Enterprise Solutions

MARCH- 2015 CIOREVIEW.COM

Company of the Month

Anil. R. Yerramreddy, CEO, MOURITech

Entrepreneur of the Month

Gary Gauba, Chairman & CEO, Cognilytics

CEO of the Month

Timothy Singleton, CEO, Achieve IT Solutions

Synactive: Demystifying the Convoluted SAP User Interface

Thomas Ewe, CEO

$ 15US SE 12

0 74470 91626 0

CIO REVIEW
44790, S Grimmer Blvd.
#202, Fremont, CA-94538

CONTENTS

48

ENTERPRENEUR OF THE MONTH

90

COMPANY OF THE MONTH

10

Synactive:
Demystifying the Convoluted SAP User Interface

Thomas Ewe, CEO

COVER STORY

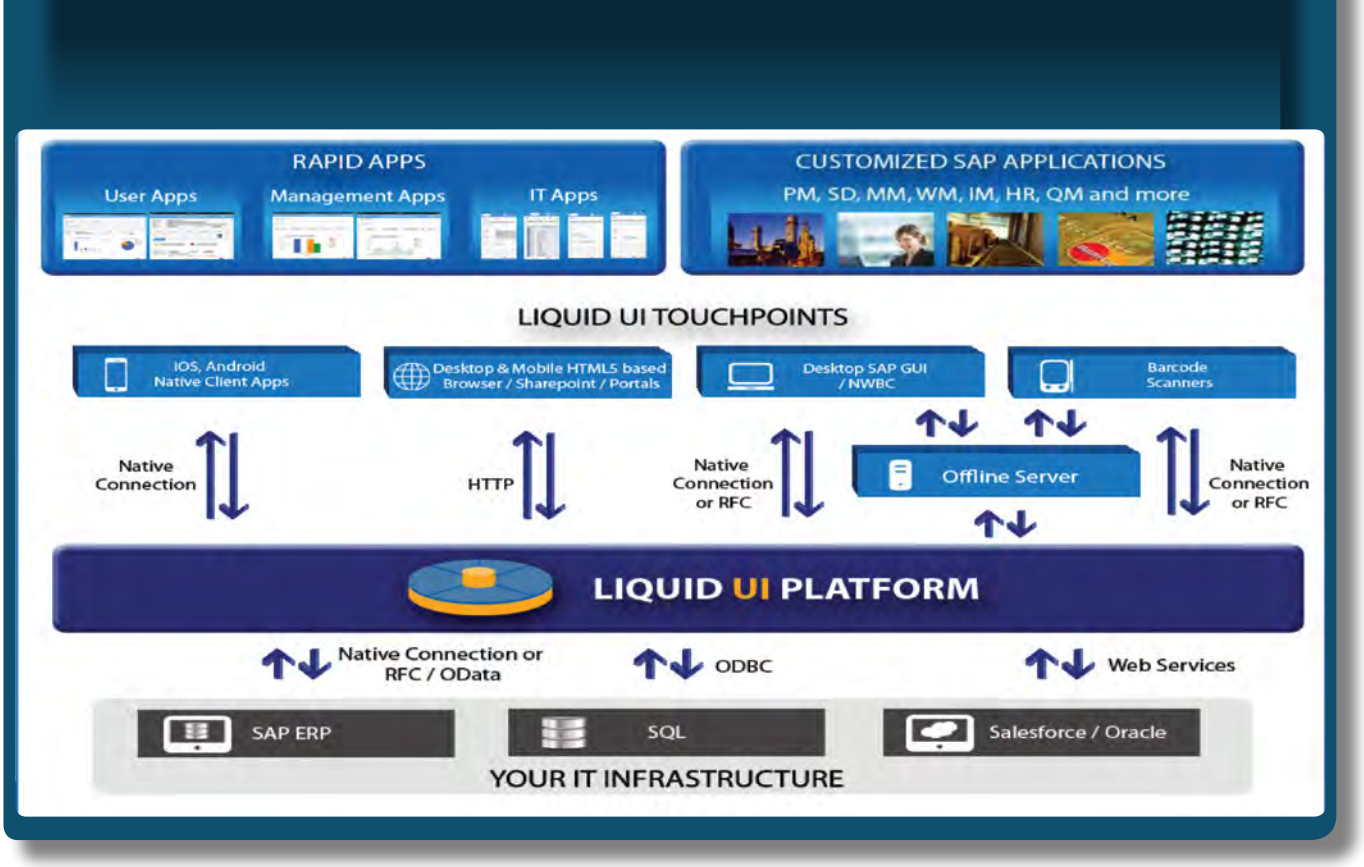
On the final eve of the recent Americas' SAP Users' Group (ASUG) Meeting at Omni Fort Worth Hotel in Texas, Thomas Ewe, wowed ASUG volunteers from across the country with the story of how his creation—Liquid UI—is revolutionizing the way users interact with SAP. "Not every company can afford to develop software, it is easier to buy off the shelf that works," the CEO of Synactive starts with a provoking note. While the tech-savvy users are quite comfortable with the complex SAP screens, according to a recent Gartner report, 80 percent of the casual users rated SAP GUI as "poor or not good." Take plant maintenance for example—in addition to maintaining machinery, asking technicians or engineers to fiddle around with the intimidating SAP interface as a part of bookkeeping is certain to irk them. "This is exactly what we solve," emphasizes Ewe. Put simply, Synactive takes the SAP screens, improves it and makes it simple for users whose main job is to fix machinery and not mucking around with SAP screens.

Be it a manufacturer of cat food or missiles, the same fully featured SAP system is being used and this leads to certain users bypassing many of the fields and screens because they are unaware of what to key in. This usability issue directly results in low productivity and increases erroneous outcomes. Ridden with constant changes and increasing complexity, the SAP UX strategy is confusing and is filled with white spaces.

Synactive: Demystifying the Convoluted SAP User Interface

By Raj Kumar

Thomas Ewe,
CEO



You don't 'cure' UI, you manage it

"You don't 'cure' UI, you manage it," notes Ewe. In situations where a company that is using SAP introduces a pricing condition to apply special pricing for seasonal discounts or when an organization acquires another company, the impact it has on the UI being used is significant. Moreover, a kernel upgrade for every patch, hot fix or maintenance update is simply not feasible for a number of companies. "UI/UX should be treated as an infrastructure to be managed—something you live with and improve gradually to fit the business as it moves along," reveals Ewe. Synactive has a track record of working with users and providing proven alternatives that does not force them to upgrade.

The Fluidity of Liquid UI Platform

Pivotal to everything that Synactive does is its Liquid UI platform—a central point where Synactive changes the UI and brings down the number of screens users have to deal with from ten to one. For example, in a typical VA01 SD transaction, a user navigates multiple screens and pages to perform a transaction. In contrast, the same process can be done within a single screen when Liquid UI is used. One of the largest alcoholic beverage companies in the world leverages Synactive's technology to reduce the number of complex screens it has to navigate to perform transactions, create notifications, and work orders to a single customized screen. Synactive reduces error occurrence rate by 80 percent and shortens the time consumption by 60 percent.

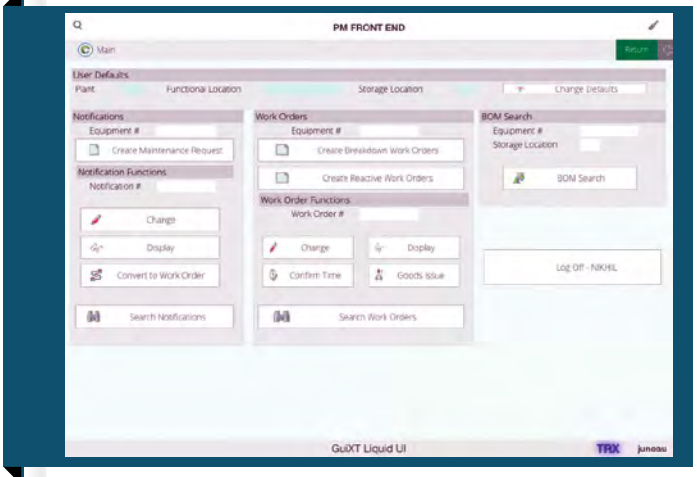
The Liquid UI platform connects an organization's IT infrastructure—SAP ERP, SQL, and Salesforce—with various touchpoints like desktops, mobile devices, barcode scanners, and offline mobile devices. With one UI customization, users can connect various backend systems. Synactive's prebuilt applications—the Rapid Applications—can be deployed seamlessly on different mobile platforms. Besides offering a single comprehensive platform, the company leverages SAP's proven native connectivity pipe to link different components together. "Enterprises connect to SAP through native connectivity, to SQL through our Open Database Connectivity (ODBC), and to Salesforce through web services," says Ewe. "We have a radically cleaner infrastructure and architecture," he adds. Ewe is proud to make SAP available at the fingertips of end users through Synactive's native connectivity mobile applications. "With one application, the whole world of SAP opens up to you."

Unifying your stack

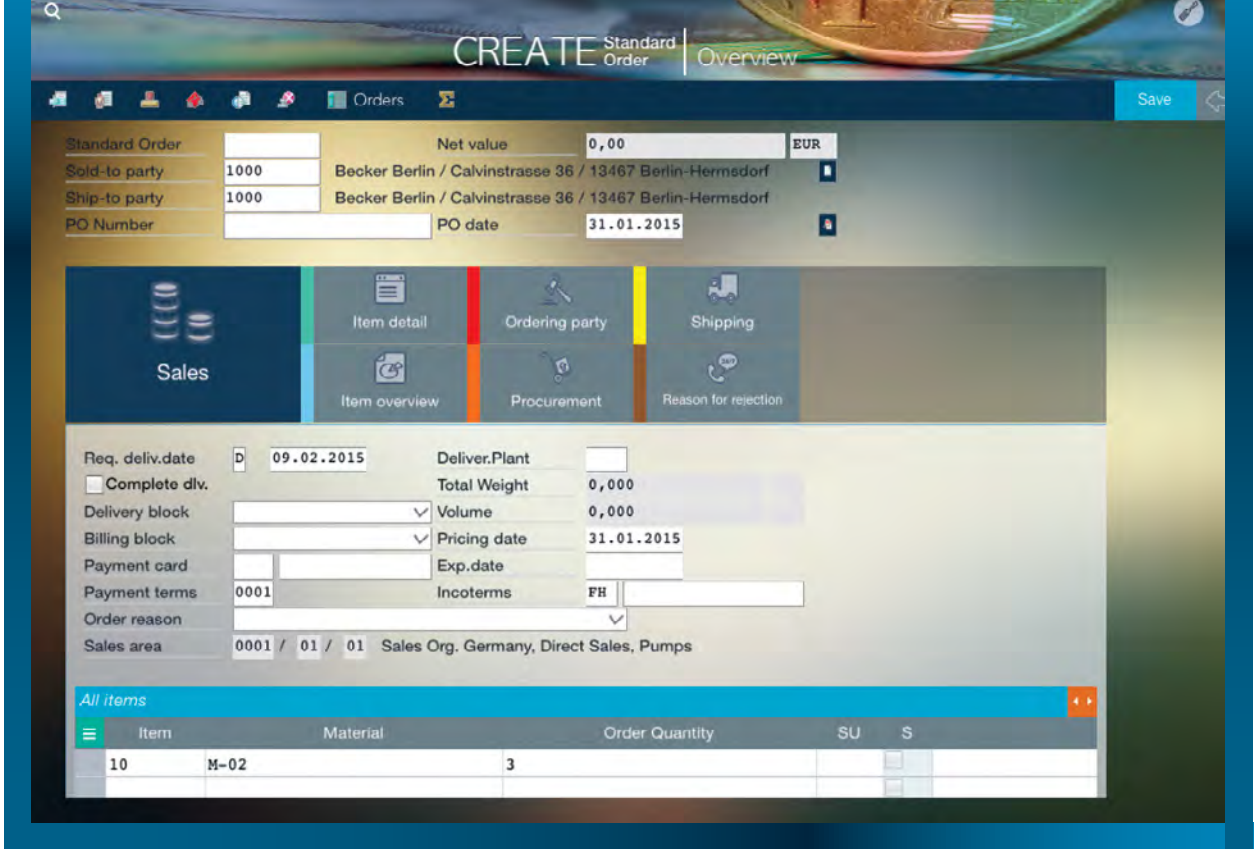
Deployment Target	SAP Offering	Synactive Offering
Desktop	• Netweaver Business Client	• Liquid UI for SAP GUI*
Web	• Screen Personas with Silverlight 2.0 • Screen Personas 3.0 • Sybase SMP + HTML-5 • UI-5 + Gateway • Netweaver Portal	• Liquid UI for HTML5*
Mobile	• Syclo • HTML-5, Fiori	• Liquid UI for iOS* • Liquid UI for Android*
Scanning	• SAP Console	• Liquid UI for Handhelds*
Offline	• Syclo	• Liquid UI Offline*
		* One development environment and code base

Unifying the Technology Stack

Typically, SAP offers disparate and incongruous technologies for different platforms. Unlike Synactive, the enterprise software giant lacks a singular vision that spans across divergent platforms. "Synactive unifies your technology stack," remarks Ewe. In the case of low volume, low usage transactions, SAP's Fiori, Personas, and UI5 could be used if businesses can deal with the kernel upgrades required on an on-going basis for maintenance, Synactive's Liquid UI is front-end technology that does not touch the backend, and can be used all across the board—SAP GUI or web browsers or mobile. In fact, for SAP GUI, Liquid UI is the only option for high volume transactions. In situations that call for fast response time for hundreds of users—transactions like VA01—Liquid UI is again the sole option that can be used across the spectrum besides programming in low level code using Advanced Business Application Programming (ABAP) or Java. Same is the case for low volume transactions because Fiori still requires coding in the backend. "It is either ABAP or our Liquid UI," adds Ewe. However, he does not recommend using the browser for high volume transactions due to significant latency issues.

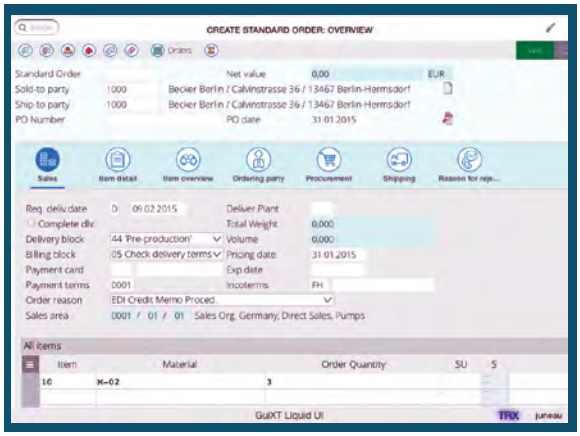


The prowess of Liquid UI is evident in the way it has helped hundreds of corporations including ESRI bring down the time to perform VA01 transactions from eight minutes to three minutes, while reducing the number of screens from 22 to 3. On one occasion, Synactive simplified the purchase requisition creation at Advanced Energy (AE), a leading developer of technologies critical to high-technology manufacturing processes. "AE's user community was struggling and complaining about the use of SAP and the transactions being extensive and difficult to use," says Ewe. AE needed a way to address these issues while still being compliant with SAP standards and best practices. Since Liquid UI allows companies to develop and streamline their SAP without any ABAP modifications, this became the best option available to AE. "We enabled AE to customize and roll-out the simplified purchase requisition screens to their user community in less than two months, at a fraction of the cost of developing the customized screens in ABAP," reveals Ewe. AE quickly



> **With one application, the whole world of SAP opens up to you**

realized cost savings by streamlining user input time from 45 minutes to 2 minutes with zero training to users. Furthermore, AE was also able to cut the purchase requisition creation time in half from 8 minutes to 4 minutes and overall, Synactive saved AE over $100K per employee, per quarter!



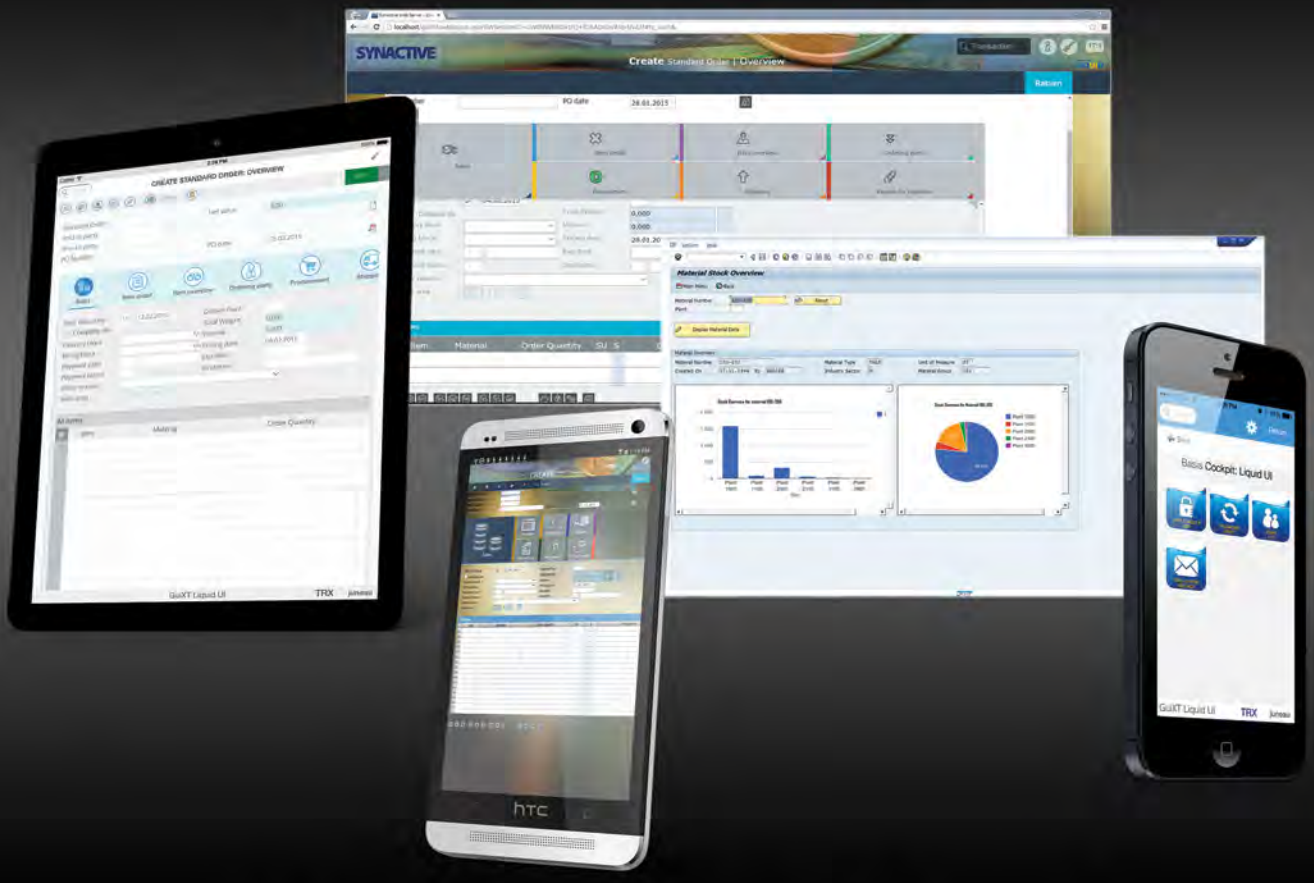
Why Pick Liquid UI?

In the words of Ewe, "We fill a lot of the holes and white spaces in the UX strategy." And like an icing on the cake, Liquid UI pays for itself in less than 60 days. The company has been in this arena for many years and Ewe's team has accumulated a considerable amount of domain expertise. "We have been helping companies run their sales and distribution, plant maintenance, warehouse management, and material management better on GuiXT," comments Ewe. Synactive has been consistently adopting the latest technologies and keeping up with the market changes. "Our patented iOS and Android solutions are built from the ground up to leverage all the power of SAP such as online help documents, reports, variant and configurations, as well as the power of the device such as using the camera for barcode scanning, or email for SAP workflow. Any custom transaction and SAP workflow can be easily extended to mobile devices. SAP business applications/ modules do not have to be ported or repackaged for usage," adds Ewe.

Having brought "liquidity" to the world of complex and unattractive SAP interface, Ewe is very much excited about Synactive's solutions for iOS and Android. Looking to the future, Ewe remarks, "We are going to make it the best experience possible to access SAP through mobile devices." Currently, there are already about 300,000 SAP screens that can be accessed immediately through Synactive's mobile application. For the foreseeable future, expect the company to continue focusing on their forte—reshaping the UI of SAP. The fact that Synactive's core technology is bundled inside of SAP, speaks for itself. CR

A New SAP® UX With LIQUID®

Re-Imagine • Mobilize • Deploy



Access all 300,000 ERP screens on a new native iOS App* with UI5

- No rebuilding of existing transactions
- Runs with or without HANA
- Supports ECC 4.6C and above
- 16 years of domain expertise

Download on the App Store

ANDROID APP ON Google play

SAP Partner

* App available on iOS, Android and Windows CE

www.guixt.com