



Planisware

Review From A Customer

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Review by a Real User

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VALUABLE FEATURES

1. Planisware (from legacy OPX2, P5, and now V6) is a flexible fusion of project, product, portfolio, and time management. It successfully enables prioritization of business cases, resource capacity planning and utilization, extensive scheduling, and multi-national monetary costs with individual rate escalations. Planisware can handle and display concurrent complex projects with long time horizons and intensive resourcing (such as R&D). User-adaptable views of data can be tailored to a variety of user classes. 2. Planisware has depth of capabilities to enable a given organization to address solutions according to most pressing need, whether that be resource planning, time card administration, project scheduling, or portfolio prioritization. Moreover, each solution can flexibly embrace local business processes. Within widely accepted project management principles, Planisware genuinely offers, "Have it your way." Adopting a narrowly defined vendor-imposed solution is out of scope. 3. Planisware excels in resource planning, especially with providing depth for an extensive set of algorithms in parametric estimation. For example, large R&D pharma organizations can exceed the limits of available database columns with locally defined attributes (or fields). Planisware makes provision for defining "drivers" (e.g., project complexity) in separate database tables from attributes used for sorting or filtering in order to remain within Oracle or SQL Server database constraints on any given table. 4. Planisware is not only a software application within IT, but more significantly, an enterprise solution that enables business change and evolution without requiring corresponding software programming or intervention. Without question, Planisware still requires extensive, skilled, and experienced team collaboration to effect successful implementation--probably more than less capable competitive offerings. In other words, Planisware *cannot* auto-implement effortlessly for a given company's actual business processes. Granting the need for planned, prioritized deployment and making ample provision for competent operational maintainability, Planisware offers unsurpassed empowerment to business users to extend and adapt the deployed configuration, particularly when application expertise is governed and embedded in the business rather than controlled exclusively within IT. Reducing day-to-day dependence upon IT is a hidden distinctive of Planisware. 5. Planisware thoughtfully builds additional capabilities into virtually every major release for enhanced functionality. In practice, Planisware, as an array of integrated, critical planning tools, will not become obsolete any more than comprehensive financial suites such as SAP. Planisware is a revitalizing "blank canvas" for enterprise project/product portfolio management that keeps conforming to organizational needs. 6. With V6, Planisware makes marked performance improvements in the underlying software kernel. Ease of use in V6 is substantially better than earlier releases. Capability for non-technical users to configure Planisware continues to expand. Many administrator changes are now more PMO-empowered instead of requiring IT superuser intervention.

IMPROVEMENTS TO MY ORGANIZATION

1. Lessons learned from initial deployment usually warrant subsequent "refreshed" deployments. In some cases, these initiatives embrace newly identified requirements and use a later, major release of Planisware. While this may appear to be needlessly labor intensive, collective insights learned from one release can magnify the effectiveness of the next. 2. Planisware governance should be multilateral in scope under proactive leadership of a vice-president level "champion" of portfolio/project/product strategic deliverables. 3. Personnel involved with Planisware implementation, deployment, operations, training, and governance need to embrace succession planning. Responsibilities constantly change in organization; these roles must be appropriately renewed. 4. Commitment to Planisware, as with other enterprise solutions, calls for ongoing advocacy and frequent re-selling of effectiveness and benefit realization. That commitment and confidence must prevail at the upper level of a company and permeate throughout the organization for long-term success.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Through P5 SP2 custom Planisware reports (as distinct from built-in reporting styles on object lists) have been far too complex for non-specialists to master. Generally speaking, any given custom report used to require an experienced expert about a day to a day-and-a-half to design and implement. P5 SP3 inaugurated Planisware Explorer (PEX), a faster, drag-and-drop report designer that now enables users to visualize key performance indicators for both projects and portfolio. V6 PEX offers templates for dozens of charts and dashboards, including pipeline funnel, innovation map. "Delta reporting"--determining and displaying data differences for any given report at two points in time to answer the business question, "What has changed?"--remains unaddressed in V6 SP1. 2. Major Planisware releases typically require substantial manual and macro-enabled work to update from one version to a later one. Software updates (in-line "patches" that reside on top of the kernel) may also be necessary. The most efficient way to accomplish these occasional version updates is by retaining Planisware's own consultants, who are not inexpensive. They understand the technical challenges and can address them well. 3. Planisware scripting language enables remarkable customization of modules to address specific organizational requirements. The downside, beyond initial programming cost and special documentation, is that new functions are not typically accessible from longstanding "environment object" tools. Lack of integration adds more complexity to maintenance and troubleshooting. An elegant means for incorporating/viewing script functions and dynamic attributes--along with user-defined styles in Intranet Server--within overall environment objects would substantially enhance customer maintainability. 4. Knowledge findability and sharing concerning Planisware implementation, deployment, and problem resolution receive very modest peripheral attention and low priority from Planisware for customer access. By way of contrast, internal Planisware consultants-employees have open access to technical discussions and strategies that individual customers are forbidden to use for fear of violating confidentiality agreements. When an organization is prepared to pay Planisware consultants premium hourly fees, they will create, identify, and/or filter an answer. Planisware's business model depends upon customer's paying for consultants much more than making cutting edge technical information sharable for customer organizations on a self-service basis.

USE OF SOLUTION

Since 1998 Q4

DEPLOYMENT ISSUES

1. Insufficient long-range planning for assuring ample resources successful, sustainable deployment. 2. Typical challenges: a) underestimating the scope of effort; b) being overly dependent upon IT business analysts and IT solutions managers who lack actual experience with using the Planisware application for actual project management; c) defining approved headcount roles for who will retain responsibility for operations and training after deployment. 3. Giving in to the sizzle of customization when out-of-the-box functionality will work effectively with appropriate training. (One of the major drivers for subsequent re-deployment initiatives is leaving early customization effort behind.) 4. Using too few database instances (e.g., Oracle environments) during deployment. Unintended consequences of inevitable changes that occur in a given database can roadblock progress from one or more teams and cause needless re-work. Generating a nightly copy of a given implementation instance can speed up problem resolution.

STABILITY ISSUES

1. Distinguishing between software stability and issues arising from data integrity is beneficial. Poor data can and will impact performance so greatly that the software becomes suspect. As an illustration, a custom module may falsely discriminate between a string that ends with one or more trailing blanks and the actual string itself. The underlying Planisware software is performing normally, yet it appears to end users that configuration itself is unstable. 2. Through P5 SP3, Intranet Server (the common Web interface) balks at certain bulk deletions from object lists, such as obsolete resources. (Retiring no-longer-needed resources is an effective workaround.) Using the Pro tool (Planisware ProWeb in V6), intended bulk deletions easily and normally occur.

SCALABILITY ISSUES

When testing or quality assurance environment instances are hosted on a lesser physical server than production (particularly on an under-powered shared virtual server), confidence in performance and scalability will likely suffer and introduce stress among the deployment team.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Customer Service: Planisware service comes from highly-motivated internal consultants who have passion for excellence. Enthusiastic customer-focus pervades well-planned annual conferences that Planisware hosts. Technical Support: 1. Planisware support quality is generally high and effective, particularly with consultants who have primary responsibility for a given customer organization. Quite a number of these Planisware consultants that I have interacted with are very knowledgeable and stellar in responsiveness. They also understand project management in specific industries, such as pharmaceutical R&D. 2. A clarification from experience: Specialized technical support from Planisware primarily flows through a team of consultants that have initially implemented a specific configuration for your organization. In the years after that initial deployment, having a valid support contract is key to sustaining that technical support availability. The normal Planisware maintenance contract pertains to core software, version releases, and occasional software patches. Having this contract alone will *not* include continuing technical support for local configuration issues and possible customization concerns. 3. Understanding your local Planisware configuration is essential for addressing problems, whether they be data related, business-rule change, insufficient training, inadequate scripting, or software-based. In this sense, technical support for Planisware cannot be monolithic "one size fits all."

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