

TEACHING ERP WITH FREE SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The Enterprise Resource Planning software seamlessly integrates various business functions to aid managerial decision making and improving efficiency. There are several commercial ERP solutions available in the market. Despite special academic discounts, procuring licenses of commercial products remain a distant dream for academic institutions with limited budgets. This article is an attempt to familiarize academicians with two free ERP suites viz. Monely and 2BizBox, worth considering for teaching concept.

KEYWORDS: Free ERP, Monely, 2Bizbox, Teaching ERP

INTRODUCTION

The Enterprise Resource Planning software seamlessly integrates various business functions to aid managerial decision making and improving efficiency. Often, these applications are linked to external information sources.

The most important element of ERP software is a common, sharable database accessible to various users. By virtue of a shared database effects of functional transactions are reflected instantaneously according to business rules.

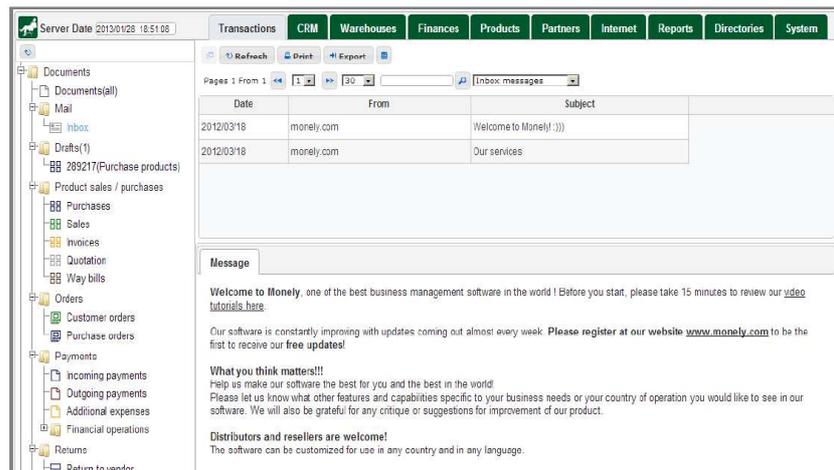
There are several commercial ERP solutions available in the market. Despite special academic discounts, procuring licenses of commercial products remain a distant dream for academic institutions with limited budgets. Considering the financial constraints of educational institutions in developing countries, software inputs in education institutes should be based on concept-specific free and open source options and not on products that bind the students Tong (2004).

This article is an attempt to familiarize academicians with two ERP suites viz. Monely and 2BizBox, worth considering for teaching concepts without paying a dime.

Monely

Monely is a cross-platform ERP and e-commerce store software for trading entities. Its single-user, free version allows for one e-store with 1000 products and 1000 transactions to provide an integrated overview trading functions.

It is available for download on <http://www.monely.com/download>. Useful video tutorials are also provided to demonstrate installation and the use of various features included in the software. The software meticulously handles transaction postings without payment and posting with immediate payment. Its premium version can be availed as hosted or standalone option on payment basis. Its user-interface is shown in Figure 1.



Source: http://www.monely.com/erp_system

Figure 1: User Interface of Monely

Features of Monely

The features associated with different tabs of Monely, shown in the left pane (Figure 1) are summarised below.

- The Sales/purchase tab of Monely includes features to create quotations, invoices, way bill for consignment transfer, and to execute purchase and sales transactions.
- Similarly, customers, suppliers and other partners can be defined through the Partners menu on the top.
- The Orders tab facilitates processing of inbound and out-bound orders. This module is linked to purchase/sales module for seamless reflection of transactions. The products can be defined through the products tab given at the top.
- The payments tab which is also integrated with sales and purchase is meant to manage the inflow and outflow of payment.
- The returns tab helps in managing goods returned from customers and to the vendors.
- The contracts tab facilitates management of subcontracting arrangement
- Warehouse document tab comprises transactions related inventory management, stock transfer and bundling of goods.

Details of the menu items representing different modules, shown in the top-right pane of Figure 1 are discussed below.

- The Transactions menu allows transactions necessary for operating the store
- The CRM module facilitates interaction with customers along with historical account of communications
- Warehouses for receipt and dispatch of material can be defined using the Warehouse menu located on the top.
- The finances menu facilitates management of financial information
- Products and bundles can be defined through the products menu
- Customers, suppliers and other partners can be defined through the Partners menu on the top.

- The internet menu provides features essential for managing the online store
- The reports menu facilitates generation of reports
- Basic settings related to currency, country, taxes etc. are to be defined under the Directories menu
- The systems menu is meant to make settings related users of the system.

A single database with related tables based on unique-id of different entities is at the core of the system.

2BizBox

2BizBox is a comprehensive, cross-platform, user-friendly and free ERP software for manufacturing entities that can be downloaded from <http://www.2bizbox.com/product/download>. Their website provides user manual and other documents that cover various transactions in detail. It includes various modules/sub-modules that integrate various functions like engineering, sales, purchase, inventory, manufacturing, etc. Cross-validation and approvals are also built-in as and when required. 2BizBox server can be deployed on premises or as an online server. Cloud-based options are offered on monthly payment basis. Its user-interface is shown in Figure 2.

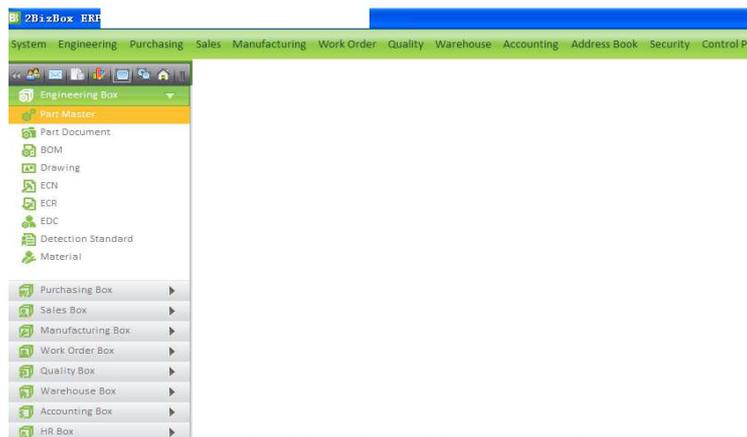


Figure 2: Interface of 2BizBox

Features of 2BizBox

Modules are referred to as boxes in 2BizBox. The features associated with different boxes/modules of 2BizBox are shown in the left pane (Figure 2). Access to various features is also possible through the menu options given at the top. Provided within every module is a relationship diagram of all its sub-modules. Important features of 2BizBox are summarized below.

- **Engineering Box**

Used for Parts management, creating BOM, Management of drawings etc.

- **Sales Box**

Used for sales order processing, execution & management, salesman management, contract management, customer service etc.

- **Purchasing Box**

Modules for purchase management starting from request for quote, vendor management and material requirements planning (MRP) etc.

- **Warehouse Box**
Includes product receipt and shipment, physical inventory, label printing etc.
- **Work Order Box**
Encompasses work order creation, approval, setup, material issue, receipt of finished goods etc.
- **Manufacturing Box**
Focuses on sales order processing and review, quotations, contract management etc.
- **Quality Box**
Quality compliance with established standards
- **Accounting Box**
Accounting functions like receipts, payments, etc.
- **Address Book Box**
Address book box allows you to add, edit and track all Customer, Vendor, Manufacturer information
- **Human Resources Box**
Employee management, including Training records, work experience, education records etc.

The modular arrangement in four levels, used by 2bizbox is shown in Figure-3. Level-1 at the bottom meant for engineering management facilitates creation of parts master, BoM drawings and other engineering documents. Above it on the second level are features associated with purchase, sales and inventory management. The customer service sub-module is also included here. Level-3 includes sub-modules viz. work order, manufacturing and quality associated with manufacturing management. On the top, at level-4, sub-modules related to accounts payable/receivable, general ledger, cash management, budgeting and reporting are bundled under accounting management. The inter-linkage of parts, bundles, invoices, orders, payments etc. is based on unique codes assigned to entities used for transactions. An integrated database with appropriate relationships and integrity checks is at the basis of the 2BizBox.



Source: <http://www.2bizbox.com/product/documentation>

Figure 3: Levels of Usage

CONCLUSIONS

Academic institutions can opt these free ERP suites to impart conceptual inputs to their students. Small and Medium trading enterprises with limited budgets can improve their operational efficiency by purchasing reasonably priced premium versions of Monely or similar ERP option. Enterprises involved in manufacturing may consider software like 2Bizbox and may subscribe for support available on commercial basis, if required.

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