



An OBA Extension

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Trying to understand the power of Web services when it comes to construction technology? There are many examples, but one that has been garnering a lot of attention these days is the ability to link data created in spreadsheets and email, for example, with construction project management applications.

Microsoft OBAs (Office Business Applications) enable bi-directional data exchange between Microsoft Office products and the core construction project management application. For example, users can create spreadsheets in Microsoft Excel, work with emails and contacts in Microsoft Outlook, or manage documents in SharePoint—a burgeoning trend in construction as of late—and connect the data to third-party project management software.

The idea is that the information contained outside of the project management application is just as critical to that which is being stored inside the application and companies need a way to connect the two. Today, users are spending too much time switching back and forth between the applications and reentering information into multiple sources. Offering offline capabilities, OBAs can also enable project team members to collaborate in a disconnected environment.

The Cram Group, www.thecramgroup.com, New York, N.Y., has been doing a lot of custom work with OBAs for Prolog project management software from Meridian Systems, www.meridiansystems.com, Folsom, Calif. Last week, it announced the availability of The OBA Store, an online source for Microsoft Office Business Applications (OBAs) that work with Prolog. Available via The Cram Group's Website directly at www.thecramgroup.com/TheOBASStore/Overview, the company calls this a one-stop-shop that allows organizations to leverage OBAs for working either online or offline.

The OBA Store offers OBAs for Prolog features including RFIs (requests for information), submittals, punchlists, and company setup. Companies are able to access the OBA Store from one location with a free trial. Subscription-based accounts can be established based on the desires of the user; this includes paying for each OBA, customizing an existing OBA, and more.

This builds off of the aforementioned custom work that The Cram Group has been doing for Prolog customers around the use of OBAs. As an authorized business systems integrator of Meridian, The Cram Group, which typically provides hosting services for construction technology, is focusing efforts on delivering a set of products that extend the core value of Prolog—linking data in a shared environment.

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