# Custom Development Vs a More4Apps Implementation

**SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING BETWEEN AN IN-HOUSE CUSTOM DEVELOPED DATA-LOADING TOOL AND USING THE PRE-BUILT MORE4APPS WIZARDS.**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One way to reduce dependency on expensive (and often scarce) IT resources is to find ways for end-users to do more for themselves. Enabling users to load transactions en masse (with little or no IT support) quickly leads to improved data-entry productivity and reduced costs.

More4Apps offer a range of products that enable end-users to load and maintain transactions en masse into Oracle E-Business Suite. These pre-built applications require minimal implementation effort. The front-end is Microsoft Excel which has a familiar look-and-feel and many inherent features (e.g. the ability to load files and use formulas). End-users can be up-and-running quickly, loading and maintaining hundreds or even thousands of transactions on a daily basis.

Within Oracle e-Business Suite there are literally hundreds of Open Interfaces or API's. Typically custom developments will require a high level of functional and technical expertise for implementation and on-going support; which can in turn mean a substantial cost to the business for custom integration. More4Apps offer on-going support and maintenance and product upgrades are readily available from the company website.

**Figure 1 (below) compares the typical custom development lifecycle vs. a More4Apps Wizard implementation.** Implementing pre-built More4Apps products will mean a substantial reduction in functional/technical resources for implementation and on-going support AND is also likely to lead to a reduction in the time taken to implement a solution.

**Figure 2 (below) details several items that need to be addressed when considering using custom development to create data-loading capability into the Oracle E-Business Suite.**

With regards to custom development there are many issues to consider like how to: enforce security, connect to Oracle, validate ensuring accuracy, display information, cater for complex master-detail relationships, extract information from oracle, call the interfaces, receive messages back from the interfaces, allow the user to correct and reload information. While creating an application that is fast, flexible and that can adjust to changing business requirements.

With the More4Apps products you benefit from many years of product development. All of the products have been developed with input from customers. The issues that you will face in a custom development have already been addressed within the More4Apps wizards.

**Trial the Products Risk Free! What have you got to lose?!** The More4apps installation process enables your trial to be up-and-running in minutes.

**Figure 1: Comparison of typical Custom Development Lifecycle vs. More4Apps Implementation**

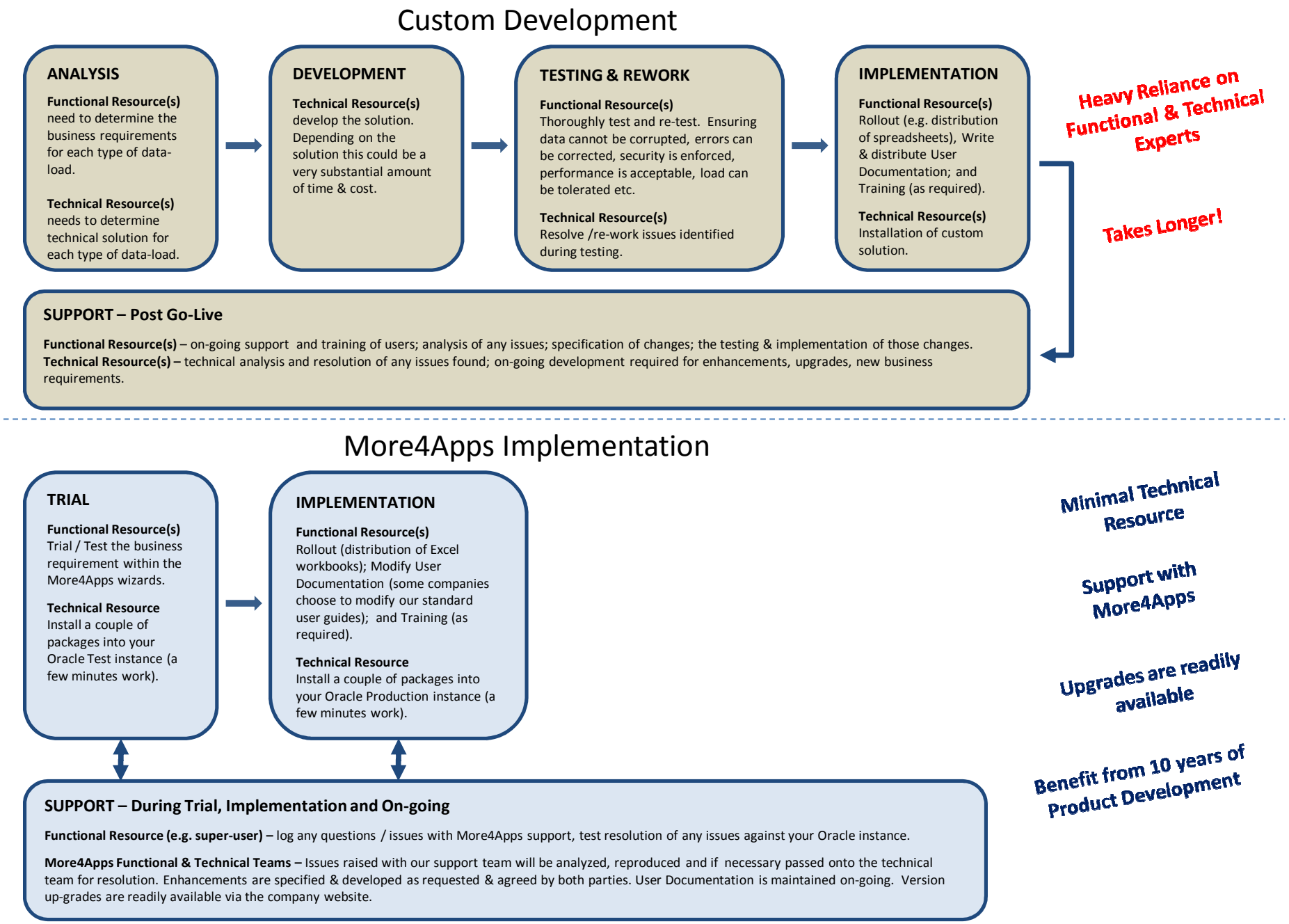

**Figure 2: Some things to consider when choosing between Custom Development and a More4Apps Wizard Implementation:**

| | CUSTOM DEVELOPMENT | MORE4APPS WIZARD(s) |
|---|---|---|
| **Implementation Considerations** | | |
| **Functional & Technical Resources**<br><br>Refer to Figure 1. | An unavoidable heavy reliance on functional and technical experts for implementation and on-going support. These resources are likely to be scarce and costly.<br><br>Be aware that some interfaces are very complex to implement and will require a high level of technical expertise (generally depends on the specific API's involved and the complexity of the master-detail relationships). | The More4Apps pre-built wizards require minimal implementation effort.<br><br>Some functional resource(s) will be required for trialing / testing against your Oracle Instance.<br><br>Very minimal (negligible) technical resource requirement. |
| **Time, Cost & Risk**<br><br>Refer to Figure 1. | Due to the nature of custom developments (the need to understand requirements, develop a solution, test and implement), there will be a substantial amount of time required.<br><br>The length of time involved and specialized resource required is likely to lead to a substantial cost.<br><br>Many project risks associated with the availability, cost and level of expertise of the required resources. | There will be some time involved with trialing / testing of the wizard(s) against your Oracle Instance. If any issues are identified there will be a minimal amount of time required for implementing a resolution.<br><br>There will be the license cost(s) associated with the More4Apps wizards. Experience would suggest that cost-savings very quickly pay back the initial investment.<br><br>Risk is reduced due to the substantial amount of time and resource that has already been invested into the development & testing of the More4Apps products.<br><br>Reduce risk by trialing the products against your Oracle Instance. |
| **On-going Support & Maintenance**<br><br>Refer to Figure 1. | On-going functional and technical support will be required.<br><br>Need to cater for version upgrades (i.e. Oracle, Excel, Operating System etc).<br><br>Need to cater for changing business requirements. | On-going support is provided by More4Apps.<br><br>Version upgrades are readily available on the company website. More4Apps support Excel 2000 to 2010; Oracle Release 11i to 12; on any operating system.<br><br>Standard functionality is flexible and caters for many changes in business requirements. Examples: you can include/exclude additional columns in your worksheet; lists of values and descriptive flexfields are dynamically configured.<br><br>You will benefit from the enhancements that existing customers have requested. |

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|---|---|---|
| **Functional Considerations** | | |
| **Security** | Ensure users have the access to view and update the relevant information. For example you may need to restrict access to accounts, organizations, operating units, employees and so on.<br><br>The solution needs to be able to be maintained on-going so that if access changes within Oracle, it is reflected in the custom application.<br><br>There is no easy way to replicate Oracles complex security framework. | More4Apps Wizards security framework has been developed over a number of years. The users log in with their Oracle username & password and then select a responsibility.<br><br>The user must have access to the relevant menu item or function to do a particular task. Specific wizards also ensure that the user has access to update that particular operating unit, inventory org, organization, account or employee etc (depends on the type of information being processed). |
| **Validation** | At least some validation should be performed prior to calling the API or Open Interface. No validation will mean you will get a high number of errors coming back from the interface (which all take time to resolve).<br><br>Consider how to implement things like… lists of values, dependant lists of values, date & number formats, length of character fields, searching long lists and flexfields. Many Oracle forms have very complex rules about what information can be entered into a field. Each field you need to populate for the interface will need to be addressed in terms of how to validate it.<br><br>Many of the API's / Open Interfaces expect ID's to be passed rather than the values themselves. You need to consider how the user can enter a value while passing the IDs to the interface.<br><br>When errors are returned from the interface you need a way to identify the data that has failed and quickly correct the information. | Whether you choose to use the data-entry forms and/or populate the spreadsheet directly, the information is validated prior to calling the API.<br><br>The More4Apps Wizards have optional data-entry forms with lists of values, date formats, searches on long lists etc (these are configured automatically depending on your system set up).<br><br>When you run the upload process you can choose to do it in 'Validate Only' mode or 'Validate & Upload' mode. Either way the wizard performs a substantial amount of validation prior to loading it into Oracle.<br><br>Messages are returned to the worksheet and the records/fields with errors can be identified. The user can key directly into the spreadsheet or open the form to correct the error. It is a simple process to reload these records. |
| **Usability** | The usability (ease-of-use) of a custom development will very much depend on the functional / technical design.<br><br>The design needs to ensure information can be quickly and easily populated, interfaced, messages reported, errors corrected and reloaded. Always ensuring the information is loaded accurately and securely in minimal time. | Microsoft Excel is an easy-to-use front-end for users. Functionality can be extended with things like importing files, copy & paste, formulas, macros and so much more.<br><br>More4Apps Toolbars give quick access to all functions.<br><br>There is the ability to add/remove columns on worksheets to perform specific tasks (simplifying the worksheet layout). |

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|---|---|---|
| **Functional Considerations continued…** | | |
| **Compliance & Integration** | In order to maintain your Oracle Support Agreement you will need to call the relevant Oracle API(s) or Open Interfaces.<br><br>How you move information from a desktop / file, connect to Oracle and call these interfaces securely, will very much depend on the technical design. | More4Apps use Oracle's APIs or Open Interfaces, ensuring that your support agreement is unaffected.<br><br>There is no client install (on the PC); the wizards connect to Oracle using XML web-based communication. There is no ODBC connections, no TNS names, no SQL-net to install and support.<br><br>The wizards enable a two-way interface between MS-Excel and Oracle. You can control the entire process from the workbook including data-entry, validation, download, upload and reviewing messages. |
| **Master-Detail Relationships** | Depending on the type of information you are loading the master-detail (parent-child) relationships can be very complex.<br><br>Take for example loading employees. An employee can have multiple addresses, phones, contacts and assignments. Each contact can in turn have multiple addresses and phones. Each assignment can have multiple payment methods, salaries, budget, costing and element entry records.<br><br>In cases like the one above there will be multiple API's that will need to be called to create a new employee (for example).<br><br>Custom developments are very likely to need to cater for complex master-detail relationships calling multiple API's. | More4Apps have designed a simple spreadsheet layout that caters for master-detail relationships.<br><br>The complexity is hidden from the user and the wizard establishes which records belong to which parent and what API's need to be called. |
| **Extract Information from EBS** | You may need to extract existing information out of Oracle E-Business Suite for these reasons:<br><br>- Maintenance, to change existing information e.g. add new lines to a purchase order<br>- Copy and create new records e.g. you may have some recurring invoices or purchase orders that you want to extract out of Oracle, modify and reload as new records.<br>- Analysis, you may want to extract information and do some ad-hoc reporting. | More4Apps Wizards have a powerful download capability. You can choose your download criteria and the information will be populated (en masse) into the relevant columns in the worksheet.<br><br>The information can be subsequently updated and reloaded into Oracle (as new or changed records).<br><br>Some companies are using this facility for ad-hoc analysis. |