Distributed Spreadsheet

-- Communication Enhancement Products Inc. --

New Product:

1. Please describe the product:

   Distributed Spreadsheet is a planning, budgeting and forecasting tool designed to provide an easy-to-use method for requesting, receiving and collating information from others. Distributed Spreadsheet leverages Microsoft Excel as the modeling tool and the MAPI interface available in virtually all messaging applications as the link between requests for information and the resulting replies.

   Distributed Spreadsheet provides the means for automating the entire process of sending out individual worksheets from any Excel workbook to others to complete, securing their return upon completion and collating the results. No longer do individuals need to cut and paste contents between worksheets in order to collate information from others.

   Distributed Spreadsheet is also an excellent tool for sending out information to others – especially when specific worksheets are only to be seen by specific persons.

2. How does it achieve its functionality?

   Distributed Spreadsheet relies on Microsoft Excel to provide the underlying modeling tools. Distributed Spreadsheet extends the functionality of Excel by providing the mechanisms to assign one or more individuals as the contributors of data for each worksheets within a workbook, providing a means of delivering each of the worksheets to the assigned individuals and providing the means for receiving, tracking and consolidating the information provided by others.

   As an example, let's assume an Excel workbook has been created to produce a company-wide budget. Each division within the company has a worksheet dedicated to their budget figures. Each division is responsible for supplying budget figures while the Controller is responsible for delivering a consolidated budget to the executive staff. Distributed Spreadsheet allows the Controller to send the division their individual budget worksheet(s), receive the completed worksheet(s) and consolidate the information into the original Budget workbook in a fully automated fashion.

Anyone using Excel 2000, 2003 or 2007 can use Distributed Spreadsheet. If Excel is accompanied by a MAPI-enabled messaging system, the sending and receiving of worksheets can be fully automated via email.

3. Describe the primary and secondary targets by:

Primary targets:

Financial & accounting departments within companies having such a department of greater than 5 people. The company must be a user of Microsoft Excel 2000, 2003 or 2007. There is no specific vertical industry focus though larger corporations will find broader usage than will smaller companies. The purchaser will be a decision maker who oversees the planning, budgeting and/or forecasting process. This will likely be a CFO, VP Finance, Controller, financial analyst, budget analyst or IS resource assigned to construct the company's financial models in Excel. The primary application for this audience will be the means to fully automate the process of requesting, receiving and consolidating data from various sources without having to resort to cutting and pasting between worksheets and manually tracking who has supplied information and who has not.

Small and medium-sized businesses having an overall size of less than 300 employees. Such companies are at a point where the planning, budgeting and forecasting needs begin to involve multiple individuals and the sales organization is too small to be investing in sophisticated CRM applications that provide forecasting as a feature. As noted previously, there is no specific vertical market focus. The decision maker will be the CEO, Managing Director, VP Finance, VP Accounting, VP Sales or division manager. Much of the purchase influence will come from reading about the use by others as well as the variety of sample workbooks that trigger usage examples. The primary application is the same as that stated earlier with the addition of usage within the sales organization for lead tracking, sales forecasting and territory management. Such application needs are normally handled by specialized sales applications in larger companies.

Secondary target:

Sales organizations within medium to large companies who have yet to deploy a CRM application for purposes of sales forecasting and tracking as well as lead distribution. The key to selling into this type of opportunity is to locate companies who are currently using Excel for a variety of sales management functions and demonstrate for them how their existing Excel models can be employed to provide the functionality often being sought from a CRM application. If a company has already deployed a sales-force automation tool, they are less likely to have an interest in Distributed Spreadsheet. Here again, having a set of sample applications to trigger the creative usage ideas is key to gaining mindshare.

4. List below (in descending order of importance) the product's key features and describe the corresponding benefits:

Feature	**Benefit**
Automatic distribution and consolidation of multiple Excel worksheets	Eliminate the time and expense incurred in distributing Excel worksheets to the individuals who can supply the requested information followed by the consolidation of that data through cut and paste or elaborate workbook links. The ROI of Distributed Spreadsheet is measured in weeks.
Installation is quick and easy	If you know your name and email address, you can install Distributed Spreadsheet. Such an installation requires no special knowledge of computers, installation routines or locations of other applications. The installation process takes less than 5 minutes from start to finish.
No limit to the number of users.	There is no limit to the number of users that can contribute to a Distributed Spreadsheet. The number of individual worksheets that can comprise a workbook is limited only be system memory.
No learning curve	Distributed Spreadsheet is essentially Excel with an additional menu. A requester of information will need to

	learn 2 new menu functions while the contributors of information will need to learn 1 new menu function.
Leverages Microsoft Excel	Distributed Spreadsheet relies on Microsoft Excel; the world's number 1 business modeling tool. Existing planning, budgeting and forecasting models increase in value and are likely never to be "outgrown". All Excel functions are retained.

B. IMPACT:

4. How will the product make an impact on the market? What is the market size?

   Today, Excel is utilized in a wide variety of ways many of which involve the need to collect information from others for summarization. Countless hours are currently being spent cutting and pasting information from worksheet to worksheet in order to collate data supplied by others. Often, Excel models are dumped in favor of more expensive tools because of the lack of collating capabilities. Distributed Spreadsheet provides that missing functionality. Through Distributed Spreadsheet, the life of current Excel models is extended for many years to come and the potential to use Excel for many other data modeling uses is possible.

   It is important to keep in mind that Distributed Spreadsheet does not modify any existing Excel functionality. Thus all the links to external data systems that currently exist remain useful. All formulas and data import/export functions remain intact.

   The market for Distributed Spreadsheet includes any company using Microsoft Excel for the purposes of planning, budgeting or forecasting. While that target market is vast, Microsoft Office has sold over 18 million copies worldwide and continues to sell 40,000 licenses a month, the limiting factor in this vast market is the use of Excel for modeling where multiple users are involved. Assuming that 30% of the Excel users are involved in multi-user planning initiatives, that puts the market at 5.4 million seats and growing.

5. What makes the product unique or special? Why is it better than existing alternatives?

What makes Distributed Spreadsheet unique is that it adds multi-user functionality to Excel, the most popular tool for planning, budgeting and forecasting is use today. While Excel allows multiple users to modify an existing workbook, it has no provision for off-line sharing, for isolating worksheets from a workbook or for tracking the distribution and receipt of worksheets to others.

The alternatives to Distributed Spreadsheet are varied depending upon the department in question. In a sales organization, most Customer Relationship Management (CRM) applications have a sales forecasting and lead tracking mechanism. While most sales forecasting begins with Excel models, when the sales organization grows fairly large, CRM applications come under consideration. Distributed Spreadsheet is not in a position to unseat an existing CRM installation but is likely to delay the large expenditure required to implement a CRM application. Consolidated forecasting and lead tracking are 2 of the primary features sought from an CRM application – both can be implemented through Distributed Spreadsheet and Excel for a lot less time and a lot less money.

Today, the benefits of Distributed Spreadsheet can be derived from Excel through the creation of multiple workbooks that incorporate references to external locations. Thus, the creator of a workbook that leverages the contributions of 6 other people actually creates 7 workbooks; 1 master workbook and 6 individual workbooks that serve as the source material for the master. The storing of the returned workbooks in the same location as the originals will produce a similar effect. The shortcomings include a lack of flexibility regarding file location, the inability to easily incorporate different revisions of contributed workbooks and difficulty in printing both the master workbook and the contributing workbooks. Distributed Spreadsheet has none of these problems.

There are a number of general Excel usage models that provide alternatives to Excel. One such alternative is the development of a Visual Basic Application (VBA) for Excel that provides the same functionality. The VBA environment provides developers with access to a great deal of functionality along with a shallow learning curve. Having looked into this technology as a possible development environment, it became apparent that there is no capability in the VBA arena to split a workbook into individual spreadsheets for later consolidation. While Microsoft could add this functionality into a future release, the cost of developing such a solution internally is far more than the individual seat cost. Thus, the make or buy decision comes down clearly on the buy side. As an aside, it is would be an expected move by Microsoft to extend the VBA functionality to include breaking up workbooks into individual spreadsheets. They are also a potential outright purchaser of the technology.

Another alternative is the utilization of a database to store the modeling information. Whether it is inexpensive applications like Microsoft Access or large-scale Oracle implementations, there are remote options available for databases. The difficulties posed by using a traditional database for the accumulation of such data is that tracking changes to the data is cumbersome, programming is not as simple as using Excel and there is usually a need to have a dedicated server available to run the database engine. Depending upon the tools used prior to instituting a database driven solution, there may also be a learning curve to overcome by each data supplier.

The last alternative, used by more companies than any other, is the traditional spreadsheet model; Build 1 spreadsheet, send it to all contributors, receive back individual copies and transfer the individual bits of contributed information to the master thus producing a complete picture. Labor intensive and subject to data entry errors, this model is easily adapted to leverage Distributed Spreadsheet. Those who choose to use the "share" option in Excel quickly find that sharing a workbook means no security from the changes of others and requires a web connection in order to access the shared file. Neither limitation are ideal.

6. Please list our advantages/weaknesses relative to the top three competitors:

CRM analysis (weaknesses in DS)

Distributed Spreadsheet does not provide any form of contact management services customarily part of a CRM application. Such services are a critical part of any CRM application. A high-quality CRM application will base the forecast and lead tracking on the contact database thus tying them together.

CRM applications will also provide a centralized database from which all other copies are updated. This centralization allows all contact databases to be shared company-wide. Distributed Spreadsheet does not have a centralized database function though such a function could be created within Excel – probably not as elegantly as provided by the CRM application.

CRM analysis (advantages of DS)

Distributed Spreadsheet has some distinct advantages over a CRM solution: cost, target usage and ease of deployment.

CRM solutions commonly start at $500-600 per user for the software alone and go upwards to $2500+ for application on the order of Siebel. This does not include installation, training and maintenance contracts. Distributed Spreadsheet starts at $34.95 per user with no training required, no installation costs and no maintenance costs.

As any smart business owner knows, the product cost must be compared to the value received in order to assess the true value. Here again, Distributed Spreadsheet excels. In a great many sales organizations, the sales forecast is tracked using a spreadsheet with sales personnel submitting a revised worksheet each month followed by weekly calls to update the content. Such forecasts normally list the customer and their contribution to the forecast. Rarely are such lists provided to any other sales rep. The bottom line to any good sales manager is knowing who is going to bring in what revenue, from which customers and the likelihood of the achieving the forecast. Distributed Spreadsheet includes a sample workbook that provides a sales forecasting model that provides just such a tool.

Ease of deployment and usage are also advantages offered by Distributed Spreadsheet. Deployment of Distributed Spreadsheet involves the execution of a single file, DSSETUP.EXE, and the answering of 2 questions, name and email address. DSSETUP.EXE fits on a single 1.44MB floppy so older machines without CD ROM drives can install Distributed Spreadsheet. DSSETUP.EXE can also be distributed via email to users if desired.

Using Distributed Spreadsheet is easier than any CRM application. Most computer users today can fill in cells within an Excel worksheet. That's all the skill needed to use Distributed Spreadsheet. The learning curve is nil. The interface is familiar – it's Excel. The consolidation of worksheets is virtually automatic. Viewing the consolidated results is easy – it's Excel.

When the Total Cost of Ownership is taken into account, Distributed Spreadsheet is the hands-down winner. Distributed Spreadsheet delivers the information that is needed at a very small cost and with the absolute minimum of user training.

Multiple workbook model (weaknesses in DS)

The only weakness in Distributed Spreadsheet compared to a multiple workbook model is a "do nothing" viewpoint. There are some people who prefer to avoid change of any kind if possible. In this case, Distributed Spreadsheet represents a change, though minimal, and is thus avoided.

Outside of these few individuals, there are no other weaknesses.

Multiple workbook model (advantages of DS)

Lower operating costs and fewer errors are the biggest advantages.

The lower operating costs are derived from the lack of time needing to be spent cutting and pasting cells from one workbook to another or from having to move and rename workbooks in order to maintain external linkages within formulas. Why pay someone for a task that can be fully automated?

The prevention of errors comes about from the removal of the need to cut and paste cells to the proper location on the proper worksheet. Distributed Spreadsheet removes the need to create separate workbooks to send to the recipients and thus removes the need to manually consolidate these workbooks at a later date. Every cut & paste performed is a possible source of errors.

Shared workbook usage model (weaknesses in DS)

Excel has a built-in sharing function that allows multiple users to modify a given workbook provided that workbook is located on a shared drive. Thus the publishing of a workbook to a web site or the direct access of the workbook via Excel itself can provide multi-user functionality. If real-time access is always available, the Distributed Spreadsheet has less value.

Shared workbook usage model (advantages of DS)

The assumption of real-time access, even in the corporate world is not always a reality. Often, forecasts and budgets are taken home during the evening or over the weekend to be formulated and reviewed. Companies with office located in other cities may not have convenient access to shared drives located in other cities. Thus, the real-time, shared access model is not always viable.

The shared model has 1 large shortcoming – every user can access every worksheet in the workbook thus prohibiting the inclusion of sensitive information. Compensation, budget allocations, forecasts and actual expenses of various divisions may not be information for which shared access is desirable. This issue alone may force the multiple workbook model to be utilized. Distributed Spreadsheet allows access to each worksheet to be controlled thus a single workbook can contain sensitive information without concern that unauthorized viewing or access will occur.

Distributed Spreadsheet removes the need for real-time access and removes the need for multiple workbooks brought about by concerns for access to sensitive information.

7. Does this product represent a new technology or a refinement of an existing technology?

Distributed Spreadsheet represents a new combination of existing technologies. Distributed Spreadsheet combines the capabilities of Microsoft Excel, the ubiquitous access of MAPI-based email systems and a little bit of custom software to bring about a new level of functionality heretofore missing from Excel. Distributed Spreadsheet is not a refinement of existing technologies as the existing technologies are not changed – they are enhanced. Neither Excel nor the MAPI-based messaging application are altered.

8. What percentage of the company's overall revenue is expected to come from the product in the next 12 months?

100%

C. PRICING/AVAILABILITY/DISTRIBUTION:

9. What is the product price? When will it be available?

Distributed Spreadsheet's pricing is $34.95 per seat

D. MESSAGES/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

12. What are the corporate positioning objectives of this announcement?

Distributed Spreadsheet needs to be positioned as the easiest, simplest and most cost-effective solution for spreadsheet users engaged in the planning, budgeting or forecasting process. Distributed Spreadsheet must not be considered a CRM application. Its strength lies in the functionality added to Excel.

13. What is the primary overriding benefit/message to the customer? Why?

Distributed Spreadsheet is the easy, automated answer to the planning, budgeting and forecasting process that is currently being used in business today. The key ideas are that Distributed Spreadsheet is easy and automates what is already occurring inside the company. Distributed Spreadsheet is not about re-engineering the planning, budgeting & forecasting processes already in place. It is about streamlining the existing process and removing the wasted time and potential for errors that are inherent in the current spreadsheet-based methods being employed.

The 30-day free trial license provides a risk-free method of proving the claims. Whether using the included sample Excel models or the customer's existing models, the benefits Distributed Spreadsheet are obvious within minutes.

14. Is there a secondary or other message(s)? What are they?

Distributed Spreadsheet can extend the life of many Excel models in use today which are being considered for replacement due to the lack of scalability. Distributed Spreadsheet has no limitation with regard to number of users or workbook size. Why spend precious capital on new software, installation and training if the current Excel models can be enhanced to meet the needs of a growing company.

15. Does this tie into any trends/buzzwords/hot topics?

CRM is a hot item today. Distributed Spreadsheet is **not** a CRM application. It is important to avoid that categorization. Distributed Spreadsheet is a planning, budgeting and forecasting tool that uses the capabilities of Excel to create a new level of functionality – one that provides the sales forecasting and tracking capabilities offered by the CRM application world.

In the case of a sales manager seeking a solution strictly for sales tracking and forecasting, Distributed Spreadsheet fills the bill better than any other application. If shared contact management is a requirement, then Distributed Spreadsheet is not a solution.

When qualifying a soles prospect, there are 2 simple questions, which if both answered yes, indicate a qualified prospect:

1. Does your firm use Excel for its planning, budgeting and forecasting needs?
2. Do the planning, budgeting and forecasting models rely on data supplied from multiple persons?

Anyone saying yes to both questions needs to receive a 30-day trial version to experience Distributed Spreadsheet for themselves.