



Topaz Bridge Has Eyes on the Giant SAP HCM Prize

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After meeting with **Topaz Bridge**, I was tempted to rewrite the title of E.F. Schumacher's opus. Instead of *Small Is Beautiful*, the title would be *Simple Is Beautiful*, with *Software as if People Mattered* my new subtitle.

At the urging of a mutual friend at **Microsoft**, a Topaz executive sent us an e-mail that introduced his company. We were intrigued by one sentence: "We've recreated **SAP** Employee Self-Service (ESS) and SAP Manager Self Service (MSS) as a native Microsoft SharePoint application, which dramatically reduces the implementation, support, and training costs."

An e-mail exchange led to a web conference call, and then more e-mails.

Here's a snapshot of the company.

It was started in 2007 by Noam Topaz, a former enterprise technology strategist at Microsoft and the first SharePoint "technical evangelist." For most of its short life, Topaz has operated in stealth mode. That changed earlier this month, with the launch of its first product, Topaz Bridge S2, and the announcement of its first customer win, **Merck**. According to Mr. Topaz, the global pharmaceutical company has licensed his software for all of its 60,000 employees in 84 countries.

Microsoft helped Topaz land the Merck deal. Thanks to the publicity and additional Microsoft support, the company attracted immediate interest from 15 large SAP customers that are now part of its pipeline.

How Topaz S2 works

Topaz Bridge S2 uses SAP ECC workflow and SAP Enterprise Services (a.k.a web services) to marry SharePoint Server 2007 usability with SAP control for governance and data integrity. This is a native SharePoint application, eliminating the need for an add-on server. The software includes 140 customer HCM-aware web parts that can be easily customized.

If you are interested and have eight minutes, watch the demo on YouTube. It won't take long to see how Topaz has turbo-charged ESS and MSS.

Why ESS and MSS?

After watching the demo, we e-mailed to ask why they had picked this problem set. Here's the reply:

"HR administration is something every large organization struggles with across various industries and geographies. They spend millions to buy, implement, and train users on SAP, and often they must develop and train specialized departments and divisions to support the 85% of their employees who occasionally have changes that need to be updated in SAP. We created Topaz Bridge S2 self-service to make it easy for a company's employees, the "occasional users," to access SAP line-of-business processes and data through SharePoint, significantly reducing training and support costs while improving productivity.

"We don't see self-service being an HR-only proposition. We see it as an opportunity to help large organizations transform their businesses by improving accountably while dramatically reducing costs, whether for HR or other business processes."

The company has grown to 85 people, including contractors. It has raised one round of funding (\$1.5M) and was on the verge of closing the Series B when we talked. While reticent to disclose the future product footprint, it's logical to assume Topaz will expand deeper into talent management and HCM, as well as procurement

What do you think?

As we said in the beginning, simple is beautiful. Simple can also be lucrative. Most SAP customers have at least 10,000 employees. Imagine being able to charge a small license fee to touch each of them. Oh, and Microsoft wants to help you too.

As always, I welcome your feedback and ideas, especially on my blog, *The Future of Enterprise Software*. Thanks for reading—brichardson@amrresearch.com.

