

Free software for SAP project team members – a revolutionary concept?

Salt Apps for SAP Solutions is a free platform created by Revelation Software Concepts to house mini-apps of value to SAP project team members. **David Drake** discusses the background to Salt Apps and how it could help your team.

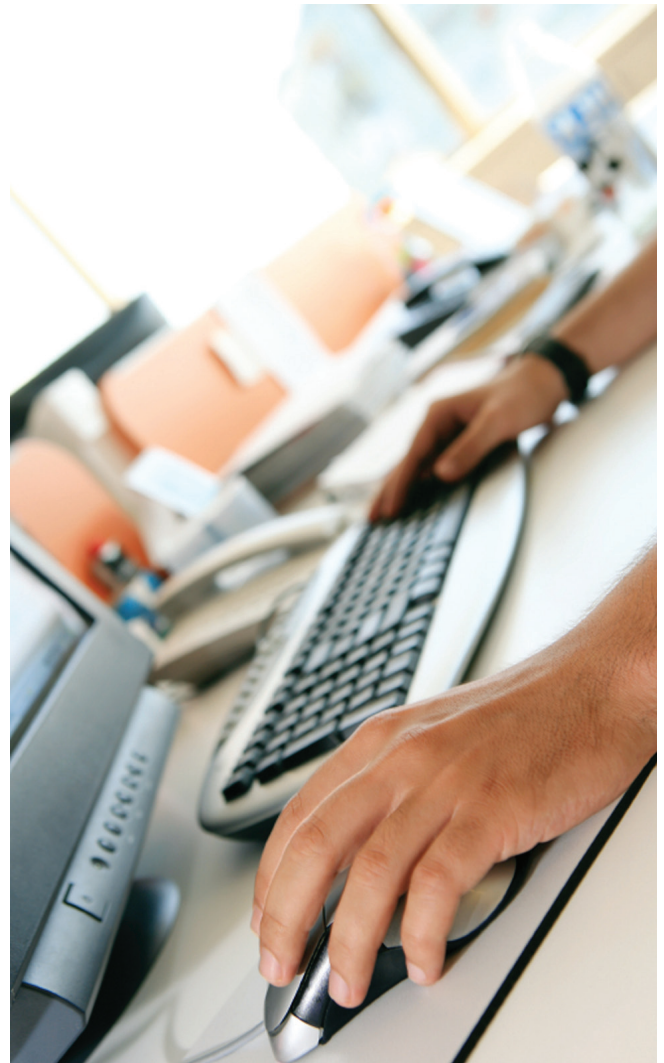
Since 1997, Revelation Software Concepts has been developing SAP add-on software, including our well-known SAP change control technology Rev-Trac, which is now in use all over the world to control changes across even the most extensive and complex SAP landscapes. However, around 12 months ago, I seeded a new idea for a platform that could be used to house a growing number of simple and easy to use, yet valuable, mini applications (apps) that would be of great value to SAP project team members. In addition, it was decided that the platform and apps should be very easy to access, and made available for little or no cost. A unique if not revolutionary idea for any SAP third-party software vendor to consider, but as of October 2010, we made such a platform available to the SAP community for free: Salt Apps for SAP Solutions.

My personal vision for Salt is that due to its availability and value, it should eventually make its way into every SAP project team members' hands in every SAP install around the world.

The technology

To fulfil the vision to provide software that is easy to install, easy to use and easily updatable, the key was to develop and deliver the product as a ready-to-run appliance that simply clips into the SAP environment with no fuss. This new approach allows users to download the software from the web, run the virtual appliance, connect it into their SAP environment and simply use it. Importantly, because we plan for the collection of available apps to grow, this approach allows for periodic delivery of new apps without creating other problems for users common to installing new software around SAP environments, such as provisioning, security, and so on.

Delivered as a virtual appliance and downloadable



from the web, most companies have had Salt up and running in just a few hours.

The initial collection of apps

Each app is purpose-built, designed to target specific 'pain points' as an easy-to-use tool that on its own may not constitute a stand-alone software product, but together with the other apps as a collection, provides a potent set of integrated software tools. Take, for example, the initial set of Salt apps which are built around 'Version Vault', an app that creates a searchable,

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accessible, centralised custom code version repository, external to the source SAP systems. Add apps like ‘Code Ferret’ and ‘Matrix’ that build on and utilise this repository, and a powerful toolset emerges.

The ‘Code Ferret’ app (a favorite with ABAP developers) provides the speed of a Google-like search over all custom code, enabling, for instance, a search of the SAP production system for the keyword ‘BREAK-POINT’ with sub-second response times, all in a few clicks. And the ‘Matrix’ app provides a unique method of viewing the version status of all objects across the landscape, enables full landscape comparisons and drilldowns, thus delivering an easy way to identify potential version issues before they create problems.

This initial collection also includes apps such as ‘WIP Window’ (reveals work in progress), ‘Cold Case’ (identifies abandoned change) and ‘Match Box’ (shows version differences).

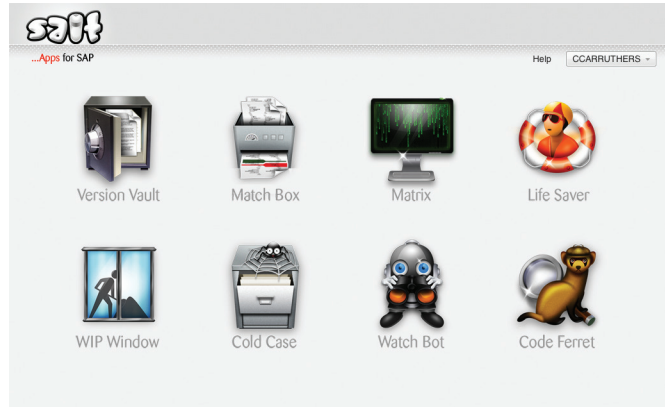
Free and for nothing

Making Salt freely available to everyone is a radical step, but essential to the vision. Making sure we could have Salt available for free was part of the plan from the beginning, and we have never had a problem investing generously in this idea, even though there is a risk we may never get a dollar out of it. In fact, it’s the company’s expectation that most Salt users will pay absolutely nothing for their use of the product.

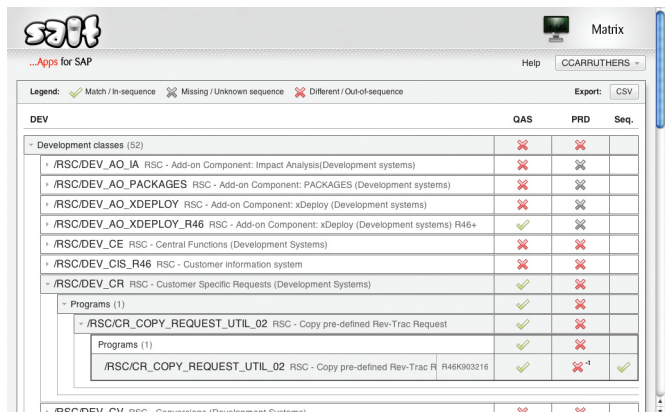
The future

Over time, Salt Apps is expected to be community-influenced, with many ideas for new and desired apps coming from the Salt user community itself. Already the Salt development team has gathered a fistful of great ideas and it’s expected that as the community grows, so will the ideas and suggestions for new apps. Salt is available for use for free on up to three SAP systems and can be downloaded from www.saltapps.com.

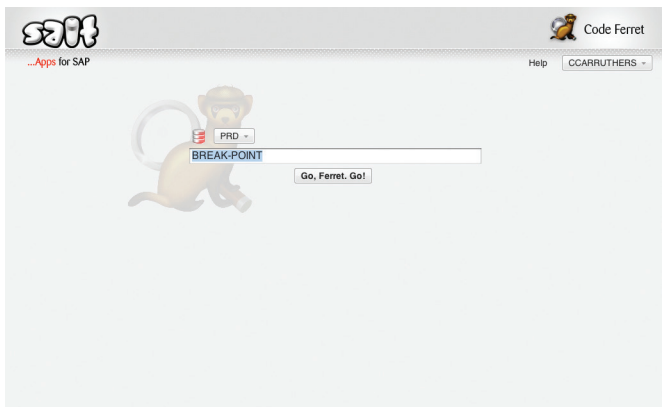
David Drake is CEO and founder of Revelation Software Concepts.



Salt Apps Dashboard: The Salt Apps dashboard displays the collection of apps.



Matrix App: The Matrix App compares your custom objects across multiple SAP systems by analysing every object in every system.



Code Ferret App: The Code Ferret App allows you to rapidly search all custom code across your SAP systems.