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Ariba, Closedloop Apps Force Companies to ...

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. . . change their organizational behavior, but neither vendor has sought input about their products from gurus in the field. Doug Barton, vice president of marketing at Redwood City, Calif.-based Closedloop Solutions Inc., says his company preferred to employ the "defining moment" approach (informal chats with users) to research how to best **prod workers to alter their sloppy financial-planning habits**.

And Martin Boyd, director of product marketing at Ariba Inc. in Sunnyvale, Calif., acknowledges that his company also skipped chatting with behavioral experts about its procurement management product, despite admitting that what it attempts to solve is "an organizational problem, not a price problem."

Nonetheless, both companies next week will press forward with major upgrades to their core product lines. Ariba's Analysis, Buyer, Content and Sourcing products will see significant improvements, primarily through tighter integration. And Closedloop's Exchange, Reporting and Analysis, SpendCap Manager and TopLine Manager programs will all be revamped in big ways. Plan for the turmoil to commence in December, when both companies' upgrades go gold.

Zach Nelson scoffs at a recent comment made here by CEO Marc Benioff that Salesforce.com will have its accounting package ready soon. "It'll take four years, minimum," counters Nelson, president of San Mateo, Calif.-based competitor NetLedger Inc. "He's welcome to our swamp, but we're the biggest alligator in it." That swamp is the subscription-based online integrated accounting and CRM software market. Both Nelson and Benioff are used to carnivorous reptiles, being executive refugees from Oracle Corp. Although Oracle may compete with both companies on occasion for midsize companies' business, **CEO Larry Ellison is hedging his bets three ways,** you might say, since he's personally been an initial investor in both NetLedger and Salesforce.com.

- Will **Java jockeys jump joyfully** with tomorrow's release of Borland JBuilder 8 and Optimizeit Suite 5? Probably, since Scotts Valley, Calif.-based Borland Software Corp.'s JBuilder is a hugely popular development tool. But much of the celebrating will be about the new Automatic Memory Leak Detector in Optimizeit. Memory leaks are the bane of performance-minded Java programmers.

- By the end of Q4, **COM middleware gets the boot** in favor of .Net when OpenNetwork

Technologies Inc. in Clearwater, Fla., releases DirectorySmart 4.8.1, its network directory and security management software. The upgrade will also improve centralized control of provisioning systems on the network.

- As if they aren't cocky already, your company's marketing people will be able to bypass IT to create their own custom Web analytic reports that can slice, dice and presumably splice together e-commerce buyers. They can do that using Bellevue, Wash.-based digiMine Inc.'s Customer Segment Manager, which works with the company's online data warehouse. Available today at $5k per month, it's probably worth it to keep the flash-and-dash crowd out of your hair.

- Who cares about real-time operating systems (RTOS)? You do. Or should. **RTOS devices are working their way up the tech food chain** into IT's domain, says Paul Zorfass, an analyst at IDC/First Technology Inc. in Framingham, Mass. That's why this week's announcement by Wind River Systems Inc. in Alameda, Calif., the $350 million "head and shoulders market leader," might catch your eye. Wind River is releasing four RTOS packages targeting vertical technologies, two of keen interest to IT: network equipment and server appliances. According to Wind River Chairman and co-founder Jerry Fiddler, while OEMs will do the bulk of programming for these systems, the integrated development environment that comes with the products means IT will end up customizing them as well. Zorfass agrees, adding that Microsoft Corp. is working its way "rather successfully" down the tech food chain with Windows CE in order to extend Windows apps into the RTOS world. One wonders **how the blue screen of death will look in real time.**