Bucket Brigade™
No-frills sales forecasting
for BPCS and ERP LX

The current state of sales forecasting

Over the decades, Unbeaten Path consultants have encountered a broad range of sales forecasting/ demand planning situations in the BPCS/ERP LX (BPCS) world. Here are the principle categories we've observed in decreasing order of sophistication:

A. The enterprise has purchased a sophisticated (often very expensive) demand planning solution that runs on a PC network. Their IT staff has integrated approved forecast/budget results from that package with the KMR file. Actual sales results are automatically uploaded from BPCS to the sales forecasting package. Bucket Brigade was not invented for this kind of enterprise.

B. The enterprise has performed their demand planning in a spreadsheet for years and the results satisfactorily drive MPS/MRP math. The IT staff has invented ways to pass actual sales data from BPCS to the spreadsheet and get approved sales forecasts from the spreadsheet into the KMR file. Bucket Brigade was not invented for this kind of enterprise.

C. We don't see this one very often: someone uses MRP100 to manually load demand planning data into the KMR file. The functionality of that program is much better at the BPCS v6, v8.2, and ERP LX level than it was back at BPCS 4.x … but it is still mighty clunky relative to the visibility and math functionality available in Excel.
Bucket Brigade would be a big improvement for this kind of enterprise.

D. We've encountered manufacturing companies that create "imaginary" customer orders out over the next x months to simulate anticipated demand. When anticipated future volume changes, they have to go back and maintain those imaginary customer orders.
Bucket Brigade would be a HUGE improvement for this kind of enterprise.

E. Finally, some places don't use BPCS for MPS/MRP manufacturing planning. Seems odd because the one thing that BPCS is really, really good at is MPS/MRP/CRP/DRP etc. Bucket Brigade was not invented for this kind of enterprise.

The first step for places like this would be to encourage the executive management committee to evaluate what can be achieved with world-class manufacturing practices (read this **testimonial** from Air-Way Manufacturing). Then the next step would be MRP II education for senior executives (click here for a description of Unbeaten Paths' 2-day **Commitment for Excellence** course).

What is Bucket Brigade?

Bucket Brigade is a fairly fancy Microsoft Excel workbook expressly designed for forecasting and a group of interrelated iSeries/IBM i programs which enable a BPCS licensee to prepare, manage, and process forecasts of finished goods demand. The final KMR file destination is automatically loaded from the spreadsheet after the data passes a variety of edit tests.

The Excel workbook data is defined as the single point of truth for demand planning data. Any and all edits / adjustments / tinkering with sales forecast data is performed in the workbook. Then Bucket Brigade IBM i programs competently move that data into the BPCS KMR file.

The journey to the KMR file

Actually, the movement of demand planning data from the "single-point-of-truth" Excel workbook into the KMR file is better than competent in several respects:

☑ Demand quantities that reside in time periods of more than one week in the spreadsheet are split into weekly values by Bucket Brigade's IBM i logic.

The division of long period values into weekly amounts is performed so as to smooth input into the MPS/MRP math engine. To illustrate, if the forecast for a month isn't split into weeks, BPCS will think the entire monthly forecast volume will be shipped to customers on the first day of the month. That prompts MPS/MRP to plan production and material needs to accommodate that huge first-day-of-month shipment expectation. All sorts of distortions and departures from optimal planning results are born that way.

☑ Second, any existing sales forecast data in the KMR file is entirely cleaned out before the Excel data is loaded. That prevents orphan data in the KMR file. The concept is that if an item doesn't have demand in the Excel file, then forecasted demand for that item won't be permitted in the KMR file.

"No-frills sales forecasting" means affordable sales forecasting

The price of Bucket Brigade rests on the power of your IBM i, the number of licensed LPARs, and the number of licensed BPCS environments. But any of those machine configuration price permutations are going to be at least 90% less expensive than purchasing the type of system described in point **A** on the prior page.

Low price doesn't mean you'll be disappointed by what Bucket Brigade can achieve. The software's functionality is plenty strong enough to start down the road towards world-class results. World class is defined as a simultaneous and sustained improvement in these three metrics:

⊕ Higher customer service levels

⊕ Lower inventory investment

⊕ Better manufacturing productivity

Questions ?

Click **here** to see the conceptual design section of the Bucket Brigade users' guide.

It would be a privilege to answer any other questions about **Bucket Brigade** software. Here's Unbeaten Path International's contact information:

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Send us an email (click **here**)

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