

Add Custom Text to Your Applicant Correspondence

by Sven Ringling, Executive Director, iProCon

You can personalize letters you send out to applicants. The author explains how to do this using the example of adding the initials of the person writing the letter.

One of the most important features of the SAP HR recruitment module is the automatic applicant correspondence functionality. You can create correspondence with SAPscript or with Microsoft Word. In both cases, the system provides standard text variables to be included in letters.

However, most companies working with recruitment in R/3 need special fields that are not available in standard SAP. The system allows you to create your own text variables. You need only basic ABAP skills and an understanding of data structures in HR. The technique is similar for MS Word and for SAPscript. My example focuses on MS Word and mentions the major differences when you use SAPscript.

I'll describe step by step how to implement the custom text variable to add the author's initials to a letter. The screenshots are taken from R/3 4.7 with Extension Set 1.10, but the instructions work without big differences with other releases. The ABAP coding is straightforward without following the syntax of ABAP Objects so that everyone with basic ABAP skills will understand

it. You can use the same technique to meet your organization's specific business needs. (See the sidebar, "Other Text Variables You Can Use.")

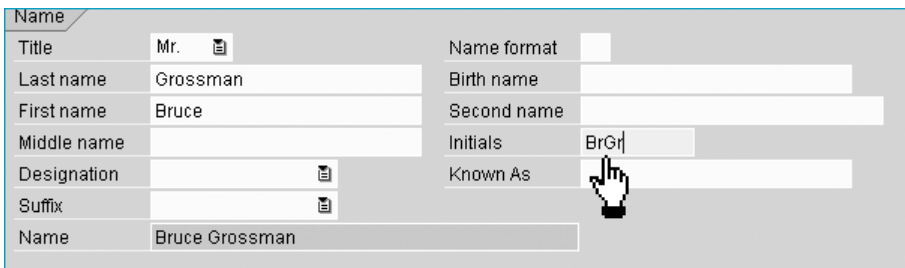
This article refers only to the recruitment module in R/3; it doesn't apply to the e-recruiting solution, which is a different product.

Adding a Text Variable

In many cases, customers want to include data about the current user in the correspondence — for example, a text variable in the header containing the initials of the user who is creating the letter. You can find these initials in infotype **0002** (Figure 1). First you need to create the connection between the current user (always provided in the system field **SY-UNAME**) and the personnel number. You can find this in subtype **0001** of infotype **0105** (Figure 2).

The logic looks like this:

- Start with username of the current user: field **SY-UNAME**



Name		Name format
Title	Mr.	
Last name	Grossman	Birth name
First name	Bruce	Second name
Middle name		Initials
Designation		Known As
Suffix		
Name		Bruce Grossman

Figure 1 Finding the initials in infotype **0002**

>> Key Concept

The functionality described here exists within the **R/3 HR recruitment module** since release 3.0D. Recruitment will be part of the mySAP ERP core. It supports the administrative part of your recruitment process (applicant tracking) with correspondence being a central part of this. Although this module can stand alone, it benefits from being integrated into other HR modules such as Personnel Administration (master data), Organizational Management (vacancies), and Personnel Development (especially via skill profiles for applicants).

While the recruitment module is concentrated on the administrative process, SAP developed a new product. It also covers applicant tracking but is particularly strong in the area of talent relationship management. The so-called e-recruiting module is a product of its own and — depending on your contract — you may have to pay a substantial license fee to use it. If applicant tracking is not your main focus or if you need a strong Internet functionality, you should check whether e-recruiting is the right solution for you, especially since no major developments are expected within the old recruitment module.

- Get the personnel number that belongs to this user from infotype **0105**: field **USRID** in table **PA0105**

- Get initials from infotype **0002**: field **INITS** in table **PA0002**

To implement this logic, follow these steps:

1. Create a structure (using transaction **SE11**) that contains the custom fields you want to fill. You can start with just one field and add other fields later.
 - Enter the name for your structure (e.g., **ZAPPCOR**) into the field **Data Type**.
 - Choose create and then structure.

The screenshot shows the 'Create Communication' dialog box in SAP. It contains the following fields and values:

PersNo	100308	Name	Mr. Bruce Grossman
SAPCOE		New York	
Manhattan		Active	
Start		01.01.2004	to 31.12.9999
Communication		Hourly rate/labor	
Type	0001	System user name (SY-UNAME)	
ID/number	IPROCON		

Figure 2 Making the connection between the current user and the personnel number



Other Text Variables You Can Use

My example of providing the initials from infotype **0002** is only one of a large variety of examples I've seen in many customer projects. Once you know the basic structure, the possibilities are limited only by the available data and your ABAP skills.

In most cases, the difficulty is finding a good point at which to start. In my example, it was the username of the current user. In most cases, it is some piece of data from the applicant master data. If your coding needs data from applicant infotypes, you find infotype **0001** in the internal table **P0001**, infotype **0002** in **P0002**, and so on. You can also make use of all text variables already provided in SAP standard. For example, you can find contract data in the internal table **CONTR** and address data in the internal table **ADRS**. To find out which data is available for use in your own coding, just set a breakpoint within the form fill customer data. You can do this via the stop button in the ABAP editor.

Examples that you can implement include:

- Other data from the current user (name, phone number, fax number)
- More data on the people who will be present at an interview (e.g., job name)
- Data that is not necessary for the applicant correspondence itself but for internal use. For example, the reimbursement form for the applicant's travel expenses often contains the cost center assigned to the vacancy, so that accounting knows where the costs belong.
- The standard text variables only show the first part of the name of the personnel area from the field **T500P-NAME1**

(30 characters). Many companies use a longer name and want it printed, especially in external correspondence. You can use 30 more characters from the field **T500P-NAME2**.

- Nearly every customer creates one or more infotypes of its own to save special data about the applicants. With the technique described in this article, you can include this data or any other data from custom infotypes in your applicant correspondence.

Five Tips

1. The process I described for MS Word works similarly with SAPscript, except that you do not need the form **FILL_CUSTOMER_STRUCTURE**.
2. If you want to provide many custom fields, you can use more than one structure. This helps to get the fields structured, making it easier to find a specific field in the long list in MS Word. Just make sure that every structure is declared via **Tables** in **ZPAP3CUS** and that it is available for MS Word through the form **Fill_Customer_Structure**.
3. Neither the name of your structures nor the field names should include an underscore
4. In MS Word, you must enable macros to work with applicant correspondence.
5. For some text variables, you must consider the language in which the correspondence is written. This won't apply for names and numbers, but would for job descriptions. You can find the applicant's preferred communication language in the field **P0002-SPRSL**.

You'll get a screen as shown in **Figure 3**.

- Enter a description.
 - Enter the names of your fields (e.g., **ZINITUSER**).
 - Enter a **component type** (data element) or choose the built-in type for each field. Make sure that you only use the data types **CHAR** and **NUMC** and that your field is long enough for the data you want it to fill it with. Also make sure that the short description is unambiguous, because you use it later to identify the text variable.
 - Activate your structure by clicking on the activate button or by pressing **CTRL+F3**.
2. The ABAP coding to fill your text variables must be included in the program **ZPAP3CUS**. This doesn't exist in the standard system, but SAP delivers a template **MPAP3CUS**. The fastest way is to create **ZPAP3CUS** by copying it from **MPAP3CUS**. To do this, use transaction **SE38**.
 3. Replace **T500P** in **ZPAP3CUS** by your own structure with the custom fields (in my example **ZAPPCOR**). You have to do this replacement in the declaration part and in the form **FILL_CUSTOMER_STRUCTURE**.
 4. Declare the tables you need to fill your custom fields via tables (in my example **PA0002** and **PA0105**).
 5. Fill all your custom fields in the form **FILL_CUSTOMER_DATA**. The basic structure of **ZPAP3CUS** will look like what you see in **Figure 4**.
 6. The logic to fill the field **ZAPPCOR-ZINITUSER** is included in the form **GET_INITIALS**. As you will — over time — have a lot of custom fields to fill here, I recommend creating one form for every field in order to have a better structure in the program. In my example, the coding to fill the custom field looks

like what you see in **Figure 5**.

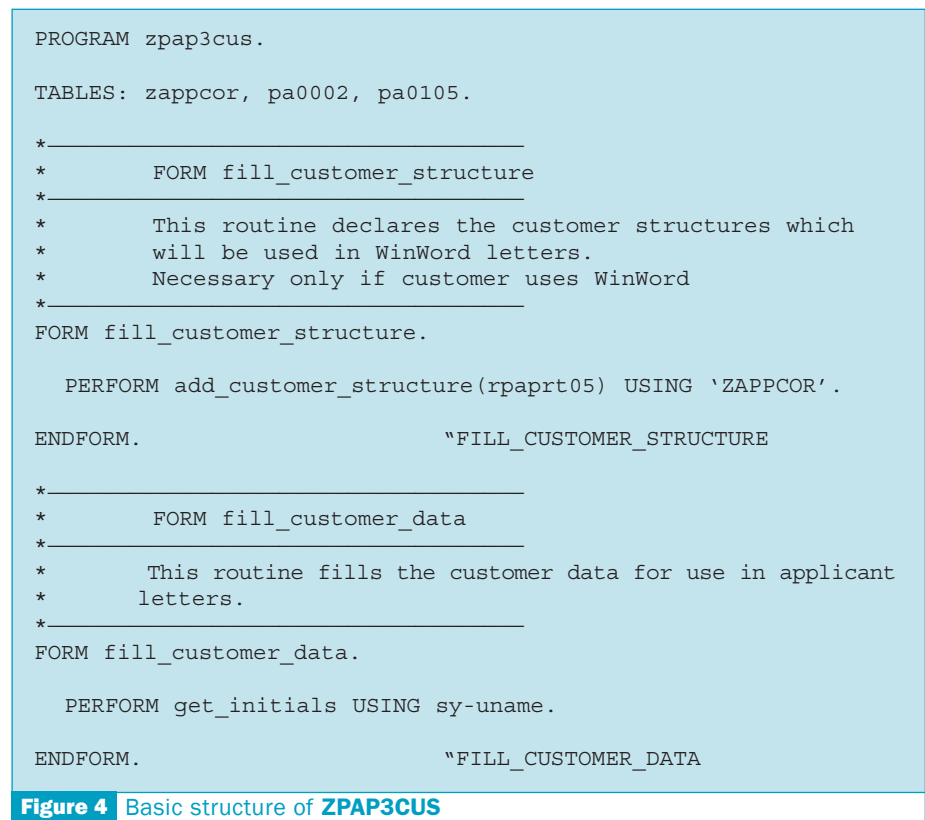
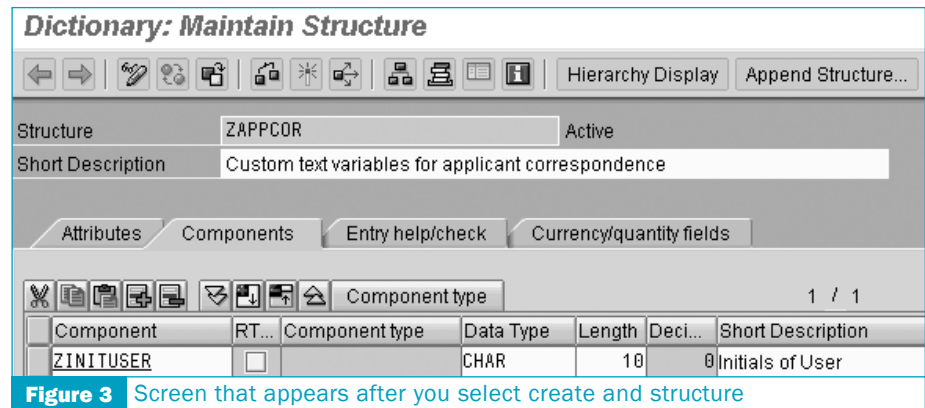
7. Now, you can create as many new text variables as you want to. You only have to include them into your structure **ZAPPCOR** and implement the field-specific logic within the form **FILL_CUSTOMER_DATA**. Don't forget to activate the program at the end.

create an individual letter for an applicant. (Before doing this, make sure that your username is assigned to a personnel number via infotype **0105** and that the field initials in infotype **0002** are filled for this personnel number.) Follow these steps:

1. Start transaction **PB60** (menu path **Personnel Management> Recruitment>Applicant activity>Maintain**).

Checking the Results

The easiest way to check your result is to



2. Chose any applicant number and proceed by clicking on the **Execute** button or by pressing F8.
3. Create a planned activity (press F5 or use menu path **Edit>Create planned activity**).
4. Choose any **Activity type** with an MS Word-based standard text (e.g.,

WW-RECEIPT as shown in **Figure 6**) and click on **Letter** (the second button from the left on the bottom of the window). A window with MS Word opens.

5. Via the button **Insert Merge Field**, you can select the new field **ZAPPCOR_INITUSER**. As the fields are listed in alphabetical order, you'll find it at the end of the list (**Figure 7**).

6. After inserting the field, you should see the correct content in the letter. In my example it is **BrGr** (**Figure 8**).

Print or Email?

Now that the content of your correspondence is ready with the new custom fields, you can determine which way you want to send letters — printed or via email or fax. Note that within SAP standard functionality only SAPscript forms can be sent via email. MS Word documents cannot be emailed within applicant management. If you decide to do your correspondence via MS Word (see feature **WPROC**), the system expects only MS word documents as applicant letters and so email is no longer an option as long as you stick to standard functionality. The reason is that the feature **WPROC** does not allow you to decide when to use SAPscript and when to use MS Word. You just decide once and for all. You can deal with this restriction with this process:

- Maintain the letters in MS Word as well as in SAPscript.
- Enter the SAPscript forms instead of the MS Word forms when you want the letter sent via email. You do this when you are maintaining applicant actions or individual applicant activities. Few users know that they can choose a letter in SAPscript in spite of the warning

```
*&-----*
*&      Form  get_initials
*&-----*
*      fills the initials of the current user using infotype
0002
*-----*
*      ->P_SY_UNAME: Username of the current user
*-----*
FORM get_initials USING      p_sy_uname.

      CLEAR zappcor-zinituser.

* get infotype 105 using username
SELECT SINGLE * FROM pa0105 WHERE  usrid = p_sy_uname
                                AND subty = '0001'
                                AND begda LE sy-datum
                                AND endda GE sy-datum
                                AND sprps = ' '.

      IF sy-subrc = 0. "username found
* get infotype 2 using personnel number from infotype 105
      SELECT SINGLE * FROM pa0002 WHERE  pernr = pa0105-pernr
                                AND begda LE sy-datum
                                AND endda GE sy-datum
                                AND sprps = ' '.

      IF sy-subrc = 0. "Person found
      zappcor-zinituser = pa0002-inits.
      endif.
endif.

ENDFORM.                  " get_initials
```

Figure 5 Coding to fill the custom field

Figure 6 Selecting an Activity type

Figure 7 Select the new field ZAPPCOR_INITUSER

you receive.

- Ignore the warning messages of the system, which complain that you are using the wrong type of forms.
- Send the emails individually by using the email button in the activity window or use report **RPAPRT01**. (You will not find this report in the menu as long as MS Word is selected as the communication system in the feature **WPROC**.)

This is quite an easy workaround, but you have to work with two different programs for mass processing correspondence and

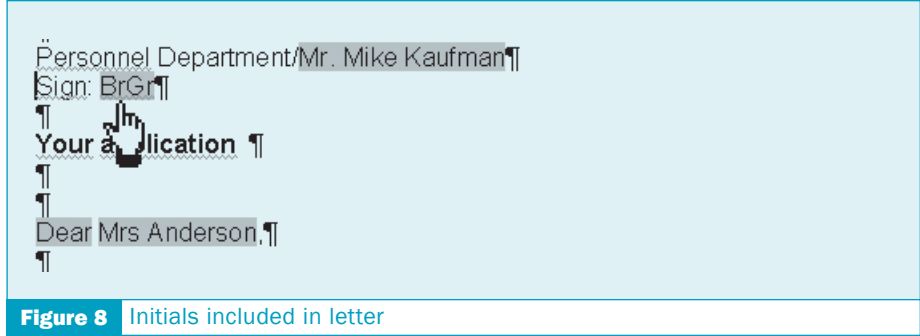


Figure 8 Initials included in letter

you must always take care that the correct type of form (SAPscript or MS Word) is maintained in the activities. If you have a large number of letters to send via MS Word as well as via email, you may

decide either to focus on SAPscript or to develop a more sophisticated custom solution. In any case, you can always use the technique shown in this article to include your specific text variables. ■



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