



success story



application integration solution

“We successfully integrated a strategic area of business — and this close integration creates real added value for us and our customers.”

Urs Weber

BizTalk project leader, ALSO ABC

summary

ALSO ABC, a leading Swiss hardware and software reseller, accelerated its fast-growing logistics and distribution outsourcing business with help from HP Services. By implementing an HP enterprise application integration solution using Microsoft® .NET, ALSO ABC updated its systems, reduced operational costs, and integrated its trading partner applications to provide faster and better service.

innovative integration adds all-around value

The Emmen (Luzern)-based ALSO group, with 1,400 employees, began as a reseller of UNIX® hardware and Microsoft® software, then expanded into distribution and logistics outsourcing through the company’s Trading AG. By 2001, ALSO led the market, earning more than 85 per cent of its Sf 1.72 billion revenue from these services.

Ongoing leadership requires an effective strategy and rapid growth. To support future business expansion, ALSO enlisted the help of HP Services to double physical storage capacity in Emmen to 250,000 square meters. HP further helped the company to

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update, integrate, and extend its IT infrastructure with additional Internet capabilities. These improvements enhanced customer services and optimized internal and trading partner interactions, accomplishing strategic company goals.

challenge

ALSO Trading AG used Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) to exchange documents between companies, but EDI code exclusivity and one-to-one communication limitations made it difficult to compete in the increasingly flexible, Internet-based market environment. The demands of extensive, heterogeneous retailer networks, large varieties of products, and individualized customer service made it imperative for ALSO to move beyond EDI for communications and transactions, and to seize new business opportunities through Internet-based, trading partner enablement.

ALSO decided to replace EDI with a new system based on XML (extensible markup language). Using HP Services, the company planned, designed, and implemented a sophisticated electronic logistics system to integrate document flows and processes. This enabled them to optimize stock management — from order entry to delivery and invoicing — and guarantee shipments within 24 hours. It also extended the benefits to trading partners, who could exchange much more information via the Internet, increasing transaction flexibility, information visibility and speed.

integrated solution

ALSO chose HP based on their strong consulting services, proven project experience, EDI and Microsoft BizTalk Server expertise, and close partnership with Microsoft. BizTalk Server replaced the previous EDI converter and expanded support to other partners and document types, including orders, delivery/goods out, goods in, and stock movement.

BizTalk was easy to learn, very flexible, and able to be seamlessly integrated into ALSO's existing Microsoft Windows NT® 2000 Server infrastructure. "This close integration creates a real added value for all involved parties," says ALSO ABC's BizTalk project leader Urs Weber. By deploying BizTalk on HP ProLiant servers with HP Adaptive Infrastructure capabilities, the system guarantees flexibility and high scalability.

Other key elements of the solution are the Microsoft SQL Server, Microsoft Exchange, and J.D. Edwards OneWorld applications. These elements position ALSO at the forefront of the market, with greatly expanded information service capabilities.

extending prize-winning leadership to customers

ALSO demonstrated its outsourcing leadership under very aggressive deadlines by implementing a sophisticated, electronic fulfillment solution for Swisscom Mobile, a leading telecommunications provider. For this solution, the Swiss Society for Logistics awarded ALSO the prestigious Logismatik 2001 innovation prize.

Swisscom Mobile needed to process its physical logistics, order fulfillment, and payment collection, as well as the assembly and packaging of cards, packages, and bundles. A key challenge was to connect the Swisscom SAP system with the ALSO ERP system, J.D. Edwards OneWorld, so that ALSO could exchange order documents and stock movement information seamlessly between different systems. BizTalk acts like a funnel to the ERP system. The different EDI, Internet, and ERP documents run into this funnel, which then translates them into a single, OneWorld-compatible format.

With full production, the BizTalk server processes 3000 documents daily. "Since manual intervention is no longer required, we minimize errors and reduce processing costs," reports Weber. Weber also says that HP proved to be an extremely competent and reliable project partner: "Thanks to the technical competence of HP, we quickly tied our customer's SAP system to our OneWorld ERP, an important strategic linkage."

at-a-glance

challenge

- Manage high demands for speed, flexibility, and service to new logistics outsource customers
- Optimize internal and inter-company logistics
- Develop sophisticated e-logistics system to ensure prompt, 24-hour delivery of goods to customers
- Replace existing EDI system with a new, flexible XML-based solution

solution highlights

Deployment of the HP ProLiant server platform, based on HP Adaptive Infrastructure solutions architecture

hardware:

- HP ProLiant DL380 server, 2 CPU 866 MHz, 640 MB RAM

software:

- Microsoft BizTalk Server 2000
- Microsoft Windows NT 2000 Server
- Microsoft Message Queue
- Microsoft Visio
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- Microsoft Exchange Server 5.5
- J.D. Edwards OneWorld 7.3.2

services:

- Consulting, planning, implementation of EAI solution based on Microsoft BizTalk Server
- Design and development of document mapping and interfaces for integration of EDIFACT, XML, and SAP IDOC documents to BizTalk Servers

results

- Flexibility to meet needs of fast-growing logistics outsourcing business
- Ability to link heterogeneous documents to ALSO ABC ERP system
- 24-hour, improved service delivery to customers
- Comprehensive tracking and management of all orders

contact

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