



ERP investment pays off

The medium-sized producer of industrial temperature measuring techniques, EPHY-MESS GmbH located in Hofheim-Wallau, introduced the business standard software abas ERP in the fall of 2001. The return on investment was reached only one year after the real start. Compared to the time before the abas ERP introduction, 40% of the time can now be saved in scheduling and purchase order processing. The sales order processing has also become considerably faster. If an employee made a revenue in sales order processing of approximately 1.3 million Euro in 2001, 2.5 million Euro are realized in 2004. This is achieved despite the pressure on employees becoming less through the increased degree of organization of the business processes.

Quality, customer satisfaction and a high level of service ensure growth

EPHY-MESS started with the production of manometers after the establishment in 1955. The family business was constantly growing. Nowadays, by using ultra-modern means of production, finished products and services from the wide field of temperature measuring technology, especially the construction of heavy machinery, as well as sensors for traffic technique, are provided and distributed successfully worldwide. High flexibility, permanent and strict quality concepts, permanent customer orientation, a good price/performance ratio, as well as intensive research and development activities characterize EPHY-MESS GmbH.

Expansion requires new company IT

At the beginning of 2000 EPHY-MESS made the decision to look for a new company IT. The old system had reached its performance limit and could not keep up with the fast expansion of the company. From the very beginning the employees at EPHY-MESS were included in the selection process. Together with the project manager and the management they created a job specification for hard and software and a checklist containing "knock-out criteria" in order to evaluate the future company IT quickly. The time schedule for the conversion was also determined. January 2nd, 2002 was set as the date for the real start. Gerhard Herdt, project manager at EPHY-MESS remembers: "We visited CeBIT in 2001 and had a lot of intentions. From 22 ERP systems

that we had selected from the CeBIT catalog, we had to pick the ones suitable for our company. The remaining ones were Bauer, Orgaplan, Mesonic, ABAS and Midas. All of them were invited to do a system presentation in our office. For us it was very important that our employees accepted the new system. Therefore, all of them were already present at the system presentation. Everyone was able to ask questions regarding his area of work. Then the systems were evaluated by means of a checklist. The abas Business Software got the most votes."



The users tipped the scales

EPHY-MESS chose abas Business Software. Not only the acceptance of the employees, but also the integrated financial accounting, the date-managed scheduling system contained in the software and, as in the first module construction, the option to manipulate running work orders in the system, spoke in favor of ABAS. Gerhard Herdt: "We have planned to do a lot with the system. Using own FOPs (Flexible Interface Programming) and EFOPs (Event-driven Flexible Interface Programming) we are able to create own functionalities which support us when optimizing the business processes."



User report Electrical industry



However, the content users of the abas Business Software tipped the scales. "In the decision making phase the supporting abas Software Partner, ABAS Projektierung, invited us to their customer forum." Project manager Herdt continues: "The day was very enlightening. The workshops that were carried out confirmed the image that we had of ABAS. We experienced a modern, vital, flexible and adjustable software. However, the talks with the users were almost more interesting. The feedback was consistently positive. What also impressed us was the close contact between the users of abas Business Software and the provider. We were able to have expert talks with the software developers and the executive board of ABAS Software AG. The ABAS business philosophy is almost the same as our own. Focus is placed on customer satisfaction, highest product quality and continuity. In the evening we had the good feeling that the decision for ABAS was perfect."

Implementation according to plan

EPHY-MESS followed the established abas project management for the implementation. This implementation is close to the standard and saves time and money.



The key user training took place in Karlsruhe at the supporting abas Software Partner, ABAS Projektierung GmbH. "We carried the implementation concept to the

extreme by already creating our own network before the real start," says Herdt. He continues: "All employees that were to use abas ERP entered their data in the old, as well as the new system. This resulted in a considerable extra burden for our employees during the implementation phase. However, the effort was worth it. We were thus able to ensure that everyone understood what the others were talking about. Apart from the shipping order no adjustments to the software were made during the implementation period. The data at EPHY-MESS was frozen from December 17-21, 2001.

After the data was successfully checked it was transferred to the new system via Excel. From December 27-29, 2001 the annual opening balances were manually entered into the system. The real start was carried out on January 2, 2002 using the so-called "Big bang method". The old system was switched off and the abas Business Software assumed the business processes at EPHY-MESS. Gerhard Herdt summarizes the day as follows: The sales order creation was running, purchase orders could be carried out, the entering of goods worked and also the work orders and goods delivery with the additional paper shipping order were working without problems. We attained all goals we had defined."

"Improvement period": Continuing improvement of the business organization

However, with the successful implementation the ERP software project at EPHY-MESS had not been completed. Now the possibilities that abas ERP provides to support the continuing improvement process in the company have to be fully exploited. Project manager Herdt: "At first we created a shipping list. Completed shipping orders can now be called and confirmed by shipping via infosystems that are integrated into the software. Thus, the status of a purchase order can be accessed at any time. We have created a review, for example, for quotations or projects in the form of an infosystem. It is totally crazy, we now only need a third of the time to follow-up on quotations." EPHY-MESS now has also realized a quality management system with abas ERP. This contains inspection equipment monitoring, complaint processing, vendor and customer evaluation, key figures for efficiency, process and job instructions. A training schedule and evaluation, a holiday schedule with overview and project processing are also contained. In the future, the organization is to be improved even further. All departments are included in the IT supported sales order processing process. An ERP supported measurement values documentation in the laboratory and a distribution information system are to be implemented in real time.



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Outlook

In order to improve the service quality even further, the eBusiness tool, abas Web Applications, that is included in abas ERP will be used. In the shop that has an integrated product configurator for a certain product range and automatic pricing, a purchase order can then be carried out easy and quickly.

Return on Investment achieved after 12 months

Real time material scheduling, a fast order processing, the fast access to data, increased transparency for operating cycles and the option to now depict workflows using the ERP software resulted in a considerably improved efficiency of the company's employees. "When looking at the increase in transparency, productivity and the time saved since the introduction of abas Business Software in our company, our ERP investment has more than paid off after only 12 months," praises project manager Herdt and continues: "The scheduling could not be carried out in a date-related manner with our old system.

Now we are able to carry it out in only 40% of the time. If the turnover for each employee in the sales order processing in 2001 was 1.3 million Euro annually, it has almost doubled in 2004 at 2.5 million Euro. The increase in productivity can also be seen in other areas. The creation of work orders with respective documentation is now carried out in 30% of the time. The processing of quality deviations (complaints), including the tracking, is now carried out in a third of the time.

Changes in the quality management system, i.e. allocations, determining of actions, verifying, collecting returns and merging the data, now only requires 10% of the time due to the integration in abas ERP. The time saving is even more distinct when determining key figures. This previously took up to several days, according to the process, and is now completed in approximately 2 minutes. All in all one can say that we were able to improve the level of our service, the delivery reliability and quality. We did this using the same amount of personnel in administration and despite this managed to double our revenue."

abas Business Software at EPHY-MESS

EPHY-MESS manufactures temperature detectors for use in motors, generators, transformers and detector systems for monitoring railway vehicles. 50 employees at the business location in Hofheim-Wallau earned a turnover of 4 Million Euros in 2003. EPHY-MESS has a Linux server and 25 workstations with abas Business Software using Windows. EPHY-MESS is using the software packages abas Business Software (ERP, PPC, MRP, eBusiness), CADKEY (CAD) and MS Office.