



Successfully Changing Partners

Seamless ERP changeover for Comet users

A match made on earth. Working with an ERP (Enterprise resource planning) system is in many ways similar to a marriage. After choosing your partner and giving your vow, it is time to live together. Both sides hope to have a long and successful partnership. However, destiny often plays a roll and the ERP marriage is often shorter than hoped. Users of the now obsolete Nixdorf Systems Comet don't need to hear this anymore. With more than just a little skepticism, they look to the future. Therefore, ABAS, along with its partners – for example SteinhilberSchwehr GmbH – offers Comet users a complete package enabling a fast and seamless conversion to the high-performance ERP system from ABAS. As a result, ABAS and its partners – combined with their Comet know-how – offer a future-proof solution.



Heinz-Josef Schaefer leans back and smiles contently. With a clear conscience he can peacefully follow current media reports on ERP provider Comet and its customers. As head of organization and accounting at HOMA Pumpenfabrik GmbH, Schaefer set the mid-sized company's departure from Comet software in motion. "It was clear to us years ago that Comet was on its way out. Its database dilemma and failure to plan for the Euro made it clear that we would phase it out. We had a long and successful relationship with Comet, but



Klaus Monzel, IT Director at HOMA

the lack of future prospects and the lack of investment security which resulted, gave us the kick we needed to look for a new ERP system." 15 years ago, there was no way to foresee that renowned manufacturer Nixdorf's show-room product would run into a dead-end. But just like in real life, the one-time soul-mate turned into a less than ideal partner. Initial doubts appeared as a result of Comet's inflexible data usage – it could not be connected to a database. A catastrophic condition by today's standards. However, the alarms rang when it became evident that Comet's Top Master 1 was incompatible with the Euro and Y2K. Something had to be done. He

had to find a future-proof ERP system that would carry the company far into the 21st century.

As a result of the company's rapid growth, its IT department had reached its limit. In 1995, a Unix system replaced the Nixdorf mainframe. Schaefer had already initiated contact with regional IT systems house SteinhilberSchwehr GmbH, a long-time and experienced partner of ERP manufacturer ABAS, based in Karlsruhe, Germany. With offices in Mettmann and Siegen, SteinhilberSchwehr is known as a Unix specialist and replaced obsolete hardware with an open Unix system using Unisys components. The scope of the project included the data transfer, which SteinhilberSchwehr's technicians handled easily.

ERP providers on the catwalk

The rapid and successful completion of the hardware conversion allowed Schaefer to turn his attention to finding a successor for the Comet system. Along with Klaus Monzel, IT Director at HOMA, he put together an ERP team comprised of employees from the different departments. Recalling the stressful time with a smile, Monzel says "Our demands really taxed the salespeople. We needed to choose the best possible system – for us." In the end, an interesting provider partnership emerged. abas Business Software, the ERP system from ABAS, and SteinhilberSchwehr, a proven service provider responsible for regional distribution of ABAS software.



User Report

Machine, plant and devices construction



An odd couple

abas Business Software is a modern, industry neutral program which supports business processes in production, warehouse management, finance and administration. Hardware independence, compatibility with various operating systems, as

well as numerous interfaces with other applications were the deciding factors for the comprehensive deployment and seamless integration in small and mid-sized industry, trade and service provider companies. HOMA test clearly confirmed this, fulfilling one of the company's basic requirements. After all, restructuring of the business processes, or even of the entire company was never considered. "The new system needed to be as flexible as possible and fit our demands and our modus operandi," says Monzel, adding "as a result of our years of ERP experience, no provider could come to us with an inferior product. The software had to suit us, not the other way around."

Painless separation

Another important criteria was investment security. With more than 1400 installations worldwide, ABAS scored well in this aspect. Additionally, the Karlsruhe, Germany based company has been in business for over 20 years. No less important is ABAS' reputation. "The performance was fantastic and there was a feeling that just said 'yes'," explains Schaefer. SteinhilberSchwehr GmbH had already proved its value to HOMA, and had also carried out the successful migration from Comet to abas ERP software for numerous clients. Thinking back, Monzel points out that "several former Comet employees now work for SteinhilberSchwehr GmbH. They know both systems which we thought provided an ideal know-how. As a result, many of the usual difficulties associated with migration never appeared." Last, but not least, the software demonstrated its better half. "Its modular construction simplified the adjustment," reports Schaefer. "We were able to do most of the work ourselves. We use the ERP system very often. All areas of the company are integrated, and almost all modules have been implemented."

The most valuable commodity

The most important aspect, however, was transferring data to the new system. Organization and accounting director Schaefer closely monitored the entire process.

"The changeover was planned for January 2, 1998 without previously having both systems running parallel to each other. Manually re-entering the data was

to be avoided at all costs." Although there were still some butterflies on the day of the migration, there were no horrible surprises. "We didn't expect any big bang, we were simply too well prepared. That the changeover occurred without any big problems, still surprised us," says Monzel. "The experience that SteinhilberSchwehr's technicians brought to the game, especially during transfer of the Comet data, more than paid for itself. We didn't have any interruptions in production." In the event of our worst case scenario happening (which didn't) there was always a specialist available. However, "he had a rather easy job and made only marginal corrections. After only a few days, he was no longer on-call," says Monzel.

The conversion was completely finished within six months. Since then, modules have been implemented in order processing, packing slips, production control (for warehouse production and order-related production), warehouse management (raw materials and finished parts), scheduling, purchasing, financial accounting and cost accounting, production data acquisition, and payroll.

Project "high rack warehouse" took place in 2001. A sophisticated logistic system based on warehouse management from ABAS enabled simplified and enhanced material introduction and management. Storing and allocating the necessary parts occurred by means of a fully automatic shell access system. After receiving commands, the equipment is controlled by an interface in the abas Business Software. Corresponding stock entries are automatically recorded and enable rapid and accurate warehouse administration and information. As a result of this change in material management, the next project is already in the works. Optimization of production based on and supported by the ABAS solution is already in planning and should be started in the future.



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