



Vacuum technology using flexible standard software

The Materials Handling and Handling Costs Technology Company J. Schmalz GmbH in Glatten near Freudenstadt supplies an extensive components program for vacuum management. Schmalz also make complete manual handling devices. Since 1992, abas Business Software has made it possible to have faster production time and order processing.

Schmalz Vacuum Components can be found in industrial robots, management devices or packing machines in the form of vacuum grippers or valves. The smallest vacuum gripper can scarcely be seen with the naked eye. They are involved with lifting microchips. The biggest have a diameter of half a metre and can lift and move weights of up to 2 tons. The areas of use are so diverse that the company is constantly being confronted with new challenges. Schmalz now has 250 employees who reach over a worldwide distribution network, and partners in over 30 countries. This results in fast and competent customer advice.

Initial situation before introduction of abas ERP

As the vacuum technology program was expanded, demands grew on the EDP organisation: Up until 1990 the EDP world of the Black Forest company consisted of 5 PCs and 2 printers - at that time the company had 45 employees. Sales were processed via a word-processing program. In the purchases area the employees used file cards and generated the orders by hand. File cards were also provided for the area of stock management. Handwritten module parts lists were used in the production area.

Main criterion for decision: Standard and Flexibility

Due to annual increase in turnover from 20 to 30% at that time, the CEO Dr. Kurt Schmalz and his brother Wolfgang Schmalz decided to introduce an ERP system. Schmalz employed the IT manager, Werner Fischer, in 1991 to look for a suitable software. He took a close look at 15 ERP suppliers, created a target specification and evaluated each system. Minimum requirements were: Programming in "C", can run under UNIX, office computers, clear screens and easy handling.

In particular the future ERP system should have an extensive and practical



standard functionality which can be easily adopted by J. Schmalz GmbH. The flexibility, however, should not be impaired. Those responsible for EDP found the ERP software in the abas ERP program package which masters the differences between high flexibility on the one hand and high level of coverage of standard functions on the other.

Installing abas Business Software

After the decision was taken in favor of abas Business Software in the summer of 1991, Schmalz set to work on the basic work: The abas ERP introductory phase began with the master data in October 1991. Item, customer, vendor and company data were recorded. Six months later, on 1 March 1992, the real operation began with the sales, purchases, scheduling and stock management modules. Then the production and financial accounting module was integrated. Then came: free text management, mail system, editable parts list, report generator, materials management, framework orders, additional databases and time management.

Value of software clearly evident

Since abas Business Software has been in use, considerable improvements are noticeable in all major business areas. Production and storage: Transparency of all processes, inventory overview in the storage area, less queries, shortening of the production times by 50%, automatic procurement proposals.



User Report

Machine, plant and devices construction



Dr. Kurt Schmalz and Wolfgang Schmalz, CEO

Faster order processing with less staff: Nowadays the sales employees process about 3 times more orders per year in comparison to earlier years. The financial accounting employees also save more time working with abas ERP. They

can always access current figures, and deal with all in-house and up-to-the-minute managerial analysis. They can also receive a list of outstanding orders at the click of a button. The ERP system gives more security when planning liquidity and helps to provide the delivery requirements. Faster access to the history data and the clarity of the prices are other advantages which are highly regarded.

Individual adjustments through additional databases: Service, customer product number administration, quality control plan and scheduling

All individual adjustments and required functions were realised by the company by using additional databases.

Examples:

There is an annual check for manual lifting devices in accordance with the UVV guideline. "We refer all our customers aimed at this legally prescribed test. Here we make them the offer of attending to the required jobs for them.", explains Wolfgang Schmalz. The additional database "Service" considerably simplifies searching the filed customer orders. "If a lifting device is delivered and a packing slip is created, all important article data are stored in an additional database. In this way when dealing with the quotation later on, this information like device description, packing slip and order number, and technical data can be adopted directly into the quotation form."

Customer product number administration

In this additional database customer specific product numbers are created and attached to the respective customer. „ We can enter the customer product number directly into the order registration screen and the system will automatically attach our standard product number,“ continues Mr Fischer.

Investment security via upgradability

"These examples show how flexible our ERP/PPS software is", claims Fischer. "The standard of abas ERP is maintained despite the individual adjustments and alterations. The full upgrade remains. That is to say: Our IT investment is ensured for many years to come. We always take part in the innovations and advancements on every upgrade." The high flexibility and the modular structure paid off as time went on. In 1996, J. Schmalz GmbH converted the whole business to team working. In 2001 another re-structure took place and the company directors realised that they had made the right decision with ABAS.

Focused on teamwork

The introduction of team working which is customer and process oriented led to substantial changes in the business processes. The abas Business Software reacted in a flexible way to the new structure. Wolfgang Schmalz: "It went successfully for us with amazingly little effort to understand the somewhat serious changes in our organisation with the abas ERP software and consequently ensure adjustment to the current process-oriented cycle."

IT manager Werner Fischer will also have his hands full in the future. „ We do not want to remain at the stage we have reached so far. We are expanding our IT permanently. For example, the connection between our subsidiary company and abas Business Software, and also the new webpage www.Vacuworld.com, with which they can inform themselves, and order from our complete delivery programme via internet."

