



From the first original spoiler to the Webshop

Car supply vendor opts for eBusiness

Worldwide operating companies which also opt for modern technologies can no longer exist without electronic catalogs and eBusiness. The North-Saxony company KAMEI enforces its sales and distribution, as well as its marketing, by means of a Webshop. As the medium-sized company also wanted to migrate to a new ERP system it decided on an eBusiness solution that is a stand-alone solution and can easily be connected to any ERP system. The switch to a new ERP software is only to take place in a second step.

Always one step ahead of the competition - Karl Meier, founder of the car supply vendor KAMEI, was not only a visionary but also a resourceful design engineer. Only few people know that the inventor of the spoiler was also responsible for many other smart developments: from practical slip covers for seats to safety headrests to steering wheel covers - many of his inventions went down in car history. The original spoiler for the VW beetle, which was at first called "horizontal stabilizer", was the beginning of a success story which characterized entire generations of vehicles and drivers. Not only the spoiler tuning of the 1980s was influenced by the company which was founded in 1952, but KAMEI is also a leading provider of roof boxes. Today's portfolio, apart from styling components, comprises many smart product ideas which make travelling in cars more comfortable. About 70 percent of the products are produced internally, 30 percent are from commercial partners. The customers are mostly wholesalers and retail worldwide, as well as Volkswagen and Audi. An affiliated company is specialized in custom-made products for small batch production (police and ambulance vehicles, etc.).

Electronic catalogs

KAMEI connects innovation not only with its own products, but actually lives this concept. An example for this is a project from the IT or rather the sales area: a modern Webshop, which acts as new sales channel and is used to communicate with customers and merchants. For Marian Meier Andrae, grandson of the company's founder and responsible for the areas sales and marketing, the presence in the World Wide Web is of great importance:

"We have been online since 1998, in 2003 our Website was subject to a complete relaunch and

at the same time a Webshop was created."

KAMEI does not only opt for traditional media such as paper catalogs and CDs, but more and more for electronic



catalogs and the Internet. "These media provide many advantages for sales and marketing when operating internationally. There is, however, some effort involved until the entire portfolio is available online and it is also very important that the IT basis is in order as otherwise no synergetic effects can be obtained," he emphasizes. A Webshop can only be used efficiently in sales, if the foundation with enterprise resource planning and the connection to business areas such as accounting, warehousing and shipping is provided. Many extensive deliberations and decisions had to be made.

Webshop for ERP

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the company from Wolfsburg has been using the ERP solution Kopias by Dakota, which is operated on the hardware platform IBM AS/400. This has proven to be a dead-end, as the provider no longer exists and the software is not developed any further. Therefore, the switch to another system is foreseeable.

"Our strategy is to migrate to a new, modern ERP system which supports the areas production and trade and is to be linked to the Webshop," explains Werner Stoffregen, IT representative at KAMEI. This integrated system is to control the



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entire business processes and the Webshop in the future. However, the ERP migration has been put on hold for the time being, since the installation and operation of a Webshop was more important for KAMEI. "Since the relaunch of the old Website was also pending we wanted to kill two birds with one stone and established the Webshop at the same time; a third project would have gone beyond the scope of our capacities," says Meier-Andrae.

In 2003 an advertising agency was commissioned to design the new Website. To carry out the eBusiness project, KAMEI was looking for the right partner in the IT area. They found this partner in the alltrotec GmbH, which is not only specialized in ERP systems, but also has experience with eBusiness projects. The IT specialists from Dresden are a partner of the Karlsruhe ABAS Software AG, which provides the ERP system abas Business Software for production and trade, as well as the eBusiness solution abas eB.

alltrotec not only has the necessary expertise, but also the right solution: abas eB provides ready-made Web Applications, such as Webshop, Service Center, connection of external systems, customer or management information systems or the connection of vendors. And: the abas ERP system with database, full function range and interfaces is available in the background in order to implement the applications. Moreover, the solution can be operated on various hardware platforms - for example also on the IBM-iSeries, the AS/400 successor and preferred KAMEI system. In September 2003, alltrotec was awarded the contract and started the project two months later.



The ground work included the integration of the shop into the design of the KAMEI Internet appearance, as well as the design of

the electronic catalogs of the various product ranges in the abas database. Then, the materials management system (MRP) was linked to the Webshop and the old ERP system was connected to abas eB. alltrotec set up the Website with an Internet provider, for the applications

the service provider installed a Linux server. All product master files, adjusted specific product ranges and hierarchies, as well as product groups are depicted in the database and can be updated there directly.

"It was very important for us that we can access the data directly and carry out the maintenance ourselves. We thus have everything in our hand and can implement changes very fast," emphasizes Stoffregen.

The abas eB shadow client technology, which enables the update of the shop without interrupting the operation, is very helpful in doing so. Changes made in abas are, therefore, available online in the Webshop immediately.

The shopping cart

Another feature, the shop user database, which manages customer data, was also set up. Registered users, provided with an individual login and password, are able to edit their own data and to record different invoice and delivery addresses.

A shopping cart accompanies the customer whilst shopping. There, the user can see all data at a glance - from prices to shipping costs. These data also include the selected payment type - debit note or credit card payment with online validation by the system.

After the order process the data is directly transferred to abas in order to edit the process automatically and a sales order confirmation is sent to the ordering party by mail. "For the time being we process the purchase orders with our current ERP system which is integrated into the necessary processes, as planned. However, this will change with the migration to a new system," says Stoffregen.

Not to forget security: current security standards such as SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) and certificates are integrated into the purchasing process, as well as the data transfer between the abas server and the shop server.

Shop extension

"In the first step we designed the shop system to start in August 2004 for our end customers in Germany, to which we provide various navigation options. The customers can search products directly according to product groups, to vehicle type or by carrying out a full text search", explains Meier-Andrae. The search results are displayed to the user with a picture, the product number/product description and the price, as well as mounting instructions; all information is recorded in the abas database.



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In a later stage of extension it will also be possible to record customized terms and conditions for the shop.

The Webshop is to be expanded especially for traders as soon as possible.

"Communication with them has already been simplified greatly

by providing the product catalog online, but of course we want to offer more to our most important sales channel," emphasizes the marketing manager.

The abas eB software provides many possible applications, as it is also possible to connect vendors, field workers or subsidiary companies using the technology of the software provider from Karlsruhe. This is also the perfect basis for the international expansion because all abas eB applications can be entirely created and operated in several languages.

In general it can be said that many sales goals at KAMEI already have been achieved by using the abas Webshop: on the one hand another sales mainstay was created by directly communicating with the end customers and, on the other hand, the sales via the Internet provides the option to place special offers or contingents fast and without a lot of effort on the market around the clock.

The "transitional operation", with the combination abas eB/old ERP system runs reliably, as stated by the IT representative: "The stand-alone operation and the openness of the abas solution regarding external systems works smoothly. For us this was the right product at the right time." An important criterion for KAMEI was also the guaranteed future of the software, which grows with the requirements of the user and always remains upgradeable.

KAMEI GmbH & Co. KG, Wolfsburg

For more than 50 years the brandname KAMEI has stood for innovative car accessories of the highest standard in design and quality. KAMEI is one of the leading manufacturers for innovative car styling products, practical accessories for driving comfort and stylish roof box systems.

As an extension of the company's traditional area of endeavour and Karl Meier's original concept of bringing more individuality, comfort and value to standard quality cars, a new area of operations was created at the KAMEI production site Wolfsburg in Wolfsburg: KAMEI X1 modifies vehicles by Volkswagen and Audi and provides complete solutions for a number of models for demanding driving enthusiasts. The client's individual wishes and desire to drive an exceptional and unique car are of utmost importance. KAMEI concepts are always realized under strict observance of statutory regulations, driving safety considerations and general product liability. Quality of the highest level has always been more important at KAMEI than quantity, whether in development, production or customer service. KAMEI products have established a reputation worldwide for consistently aesthetic styling and are currently available in 40 countries around the globe.