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IT Project Successfully Implemented

Until recently, BE has been the pre-fab production of SCHÜCO International KG, with production sites at Leopoldshöhe and Großkugel. BE Bauelemente has a production capacity of over 2.000 units per day. In July 2006, BE Bauelemente GmbH has changed hands and now belongs to the Schweiker Group of Besigheim. The company's philosophy is uncompromisingly focused on customer orientation. To be able to offer optimum products and services to their sales partners, the company has been reorganized in 2003 in cooperation with the software supplier CANTOR which was completed when the new software system went live on January 1, 2004. Now, three years after the introduction of the system, one is able to realize and specify the benefits of this successful IT project for the customers of BE and the company itself.

Short delivery times, punctual shipment to the correct destination, completeness including all accessories, and high quality: This is what BE Bauelemente understand by "sticking to delivery terms". They measure by »full and in time« which means: If even a small accessory is missing, or if the shipment is not made at the confirmed date, an order is not considered as

completely shipped at the agreed time. BE have shortened the time between receipt of order and order confirmation drastically. Four years ago, it used to take several days for customers to get their order confirmations. Today, the software automatically checks the production capacities as well as the material on stock and the supply times of ancillaries – for all elements, from a simple rectangle up to complex shaped elements consisting of several parts. The confirmed date has become a statement the customer can rely on. Today, customers get their order confirmations after a much shorter time. If the purchase order is transferred online from the dealer's program – which is the case for nearly 50 % of all purchase orders – the order confirmation with a binding date usually reaches the customer, by fax or email, within two hours on the average.



Klaus Juergen Beckmann, IT manager at BE Bauelemente, pioneer, organizer, and manager of the reorganization project: »At present, we are probably the window producer with the most comprehensive and complete IT solution. This benefits our customers in the first place.«

BE partner software

BE Bauelemente supply their customers with the CANTOR dealer program, a complete software solution. The customer can use this program to calculate his quotations, and handle the entire commercial process including their services and products (fitting work etc.) – in short, the program covers the whole process, from quotation to invoicing. Customers can order directly from BE Bauelemente. The program creates an email with a file annex and sends it to a central email address at BE Bauelemente where the CANTOR ERP software converts this annex automatically into an order, which is then submitted to the person in charge. After a brief check for the necessity of additional processing – which is the case if a customer has amended reference text – the order is transferred to technical analysis by a workflow process. Here, the order is checked with regard to production capacities, material on stock and elements to be purchased. If a problem is detected at this point, the order will be automatically passed on to a special person for further editing. One of the reasons why the team of Klaus Juergen Beckmann has decided to go ahead with CANTOR has proved to be vital: The partner software is directly linked with the CANTOR ERP system, matching the administrative part of the software. Thanks to the high degree of integration with the production planning system and thanks to regular updates, the CANTOR



The introduction of CANTOR CIM and overall process control also includes the craftsman terminals for front door and special constructions.

dealer software »knows« the master data in the purchase catalogue so that the partners of BE Bauelemente can create – on site – a complete, professional quotation. Not only can they calculate the correct prices, but – thanks to the same technical checks as in the production site – they can check the feasibility of an element. An added bonus: The order entry staff at BE Bauelemente can help should the partner

have a problem – they are using the same software, after all. One of the next steps will be the automatic online updating of master data via Internet.

Complete transparency

»You can plan, manage, and control«, so IT manager Beckmann, »only the things you know. If processes are obscure, one can only react, instead of act. This is why the transparency of all processes has been given top priority in our reorganization project«. Transparency: Everyone can access all information, dates, and statuses of an order, any time. Everyone can intervene, control, provide information. The CANTOR ERP system makes all information, every detail and order status available to all business units and allows to analyse it in a few seconds' time. Technical checks are made, the stock on hand is checked, purchase orders are released, and delivery dates are determined in just a few minutes. Nearly 500 terminals have been equipped with this new, highly integrated software solution. The comprehensive planning covers both sites. If you stroll through the office of BE Bauelemente today, you will see people working quietly and concentrated. There are less calls from customers so that the individual team members can offer comprehensive advice to their customers. This, too, results from sticking closely to delivery dates, and from implementing the dealer program at the



By means of an extensive barcoding system, all necessary information – e. g. on the status, necessary processing, etc. – are loaded from the central database and are displayed on monitors at the terminals. Labels can be printed where they will be needed, and do not have to be fetched from far-away offices.



The tasks of CANTOR CIM do not end with the completion of a product: Allocation and despatch are centrally controlled as well. The system »knows« for example the accessories to be shipped with an order. At packing, the accessories get a fixed storing place number which is managed by CANTOR. The ensuing allocation requires no searching because the storing places – as for the windows – are all known. All items appear on the list. When the lorries are loaded, barcode registration will tell the packer whether he has got the right accessories. The benefit for the customer: As good as no delays due to incomplete or wrong accessories.

customers'. Since optical archives have been implemented as well, there are no actual files that have to be passed on from desk to desk. Once an order has been entered, all activities have been fixed in the IT system, and will be controlled and monitored from there. This does not impede flexibility – should it be necessary to change the date for an order, this can be done any time. The difference compared with the former organization: The system will list all consequences of this change so that the person in charge has an optimal basis for decision. Anyway, the INFO centre always shows the detailed status of the order, the person in charge, and the things to be done.

CANTOR CIM: Control and information

Folders! Klaus Juergen pronounces this word as if he had accidentally bit onto a lemon. Employees armed with folders full of production papers, information on orders, labels, etc., meandering on the shop floor, have not been seen at BE for a long time. Even before the start of the CANTOR project, BE Bauelemente have been using a monitoring system for serial production. In the course of reorganization, CANTOR has equipped all other areas including despatch with the modern information system. Today, BE has set up approximately 240 on the shop floor which, in connection with

an intricate barcoding system, makes sure that every terminal is supplied with the information required, at just the right time. This information is reliable and cannot get lost; production managers can configure each terminal to show just the information the operator needs – not only at the machines, but also at handicraft stations and in the special construction area. The IT is required only exceptionally. CANTOR CIM offers this new transparency on the shop floor, together with CNC information for processing machinery. Disks are as outdated as the said folders; information is passed on in a matter of seconds via the high-speed LAN. The use of barcodes and monitors is not restricted to the shop floor however. A complete despatch control has been established as well. The positions of the elements in the finished goods stock are booked and managed in the system. Accessories are managed separately – all bundles get a barcode label and are allocated a storing place. Despatch is simply efficient, without tedious searching. The loading of all items is reported via barcode – the route can be reported complete at the despatch terminal only after everything has been loaded.

Completeness

Essential for the introduction of an ERP system is the comprehensiveness for all

users of the IT system. Considering the number of users, you will realize the dimension of this comprehensive organization for all persons involved, internally and externally. The dealer system is used by approximately 500 dealers, on more than 800 terminals. Adding the monitors on the shop floor, in the administration, and sales area, this means that every day, about 1.300 people are using this system – with the same basis and the same operating surface.

Successful teamwork

The specialist know-how of the software supplier and the enormous competence of the BE Bauelemente IT team, led by Klaus Juergen Beckmann, has produced synergy effects that would have been hard to achieve under different conditions. After a project phase of about a year, the entire CANTOR system has been taken into operation, in just one big step. Such a feat can only be achieved if beforehand, the project managers can set up a brilliant project team and prepare the people on the team optimally for the task on hand. All the special departments of BE Bauelemente have supported this project, in addition to their daily business: The IT department has been controlling and coordinating the project, but the real work had to be done by the many employees in the individual departments. This way, an exemplary IT project has been professionally organized and realized by two teams. Four years of successful cooperation with respectable, partially even better results than expected, prove that this is a lasting effect.



Dr. Ralf Mühlhans, sales manager of CANTOR Software GmbH, has been instrumental for the coming about and the realization of the project.