

IM/3 helps streamline strategic decision-making at APO-Bank

Integration is a key issue in today's IT projects.

However, manual approaches are no longer an adequate way of overcoming application boundaries. Against this background, Germany's APO-Bank (Deutsche Apotheker- und Ärztebank) opted to use REALTECH's IM/3 InterfaceManager when implementing the SAP® industry-specific solution SEM for Banking. Instead of programming the interfaces by hand, which would have been labor-intensive and prone to error, the REALTECH software provided the bank with effective support throughout the data migration process. In future, IM/3 will automatically initiate, maintain and monitor data transfer between the new strategic enterprise management tool and eight operational systems, ensuring seamless interoperability.

: success story

Deutsche Apotheker- und Ärztebank



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According to Friedbert Krüppel,
Deutsche Apotheker- und Ärztebank

“IM/3 saves time and improves quality when implementing SAP systems. Based on freely definable mapping rules, the user-friendly REALTECH solution automatically generates and maintains the interfaces we need. Thanks to detailed and comprehensive monitoring of the interfaces, we are able to identify the root of any data transfer problems that may arise.”



REALTECH
software



Most financial services groups have been under severe pressure from the global economic downturn. APO-Bank, by contrast, has managed to buck the trend to achieve consistent growth. The bank was initially formed in 1902 as a mutual institution offering low-cost loans to healthcare workers.

Today, it is Germany's largest cooperative primary bank, offering a full range of financial services to its members. APO-Bank, with around 1,900 employees at 48 locations, manages the accounts of more than 245,000 customers. It had total balance-sheet assets of approximately 22.8 billion euros on December 31, 2002. In order to more effectively implement corporate strategy at an operational level and to improve decision-making, APO-Bank decided to introduce the SAP solution SEM (Strategic Enterprise Management) for Banking, a powerful reporting and analysis tool.

Front-to-back end integration

For SEM tools to fully develop their potential, regarding, for example, market analysis, business scenario simulation and performance monitoring, there must be continuous, seamless exchange of data with existing systems.

As is so often the case, the most challenging aspect of successfully deploying SEM was integration: "We had to hook up the SEM tool to eight existing operational banking systems, such as loan management, deposit management, and commissions calculations", Friedbert Krüppel explains. Programming the interfaces manually was not a viable option for APO-Bank. It already had experienced the negative side of this approach in previous projects. According to Mr Krüppel, "Insufficient standardization and transparency lead to frequent errors, not to mention the highly labor-intensive nature of interface development, modification and maintenance." Against this background, APO-Bank sought a solution capable of mod-

eling and, as far as possible, automating all processes relating to the development, maintenance, monitoring and operation of interfaces between SAP and non-SAP systems.

It opted for REALTECH's IM/3 Interface-Manager. REALTECH had already acted as technology consultants to APO-Bank for the implementation of SAP R/3. In addition to an excellent price/performance ratio, APO-Bank executives were impressed by the ease with which IM/3 could be seamlessly integrated with the SAP GUI (graphical user interface).

Mr Krüppel stresses that "InterfaceManager works like an R/3 add-on. Developers and users don't get the impression that they are working with a completely new and unfamiliar application." He underlines the rich functionality of the REALTECH tool, "IM/3 is the only integration solution to support the FDUE loading technique which is employed by SAP's banking solution to automatically identify different formats when importing and exporting data."

Time savings and transparency

REALTECH's software made it possible for APO-Bank to seamlessly integrate SEM for Banking into its existing landscape without having to make modifications to the systems already in place. This was because IM/3 automatically generates and maintains all necessary interfaces using broker technologies. The bank used IM/3's intuitive GUI to define bidirectional mapping rules. This user-friendly process had already served APO well during data migration. The IT department was particularly impressed by the transparency of integration: "IM/3 monitors all interfaces - centrally, systematically, and in detail. We are able to swiftly identify and resolve problems as soon as they arise."

Now that IM/3 has gone live in a number of areas, the bank is sure that it made the

right choice. Mr Krüppel explains that "Data transfer is working like a dream with the SEM modules that have been deployed. After REALTECH training sessions and a number of custom extensions to IM/3, our employees in the various operational departments can monitor the interfaces themselves, without the need for outside help and without the need for special IT skills."

In view of the success experienced with SEM for Banking, APO-Bank expects to employ the same methods when it comes to introducing other SAP capabilities, such as the planned enhancement of R/3 industry-specific modules for FI (Financial Accounting) and CO (Controlling).

REALTECH Interface Manager IM/3 provides the entire infrastructure for developing, servicing, monitoring and operating interface programs between SAP R/3 and non-SAP partner applications. Thanks to its ergonomic user interface, IM/3 Xchange can be used intuitively and you can familiarize yourself with the product in no time at all.

IM/3's Basic Functionality

- Automatic interface generation and maintenance
- Easy data mapping and data conversion
- Flexible process management
- Monitoring and error management
- Graphical interface in the R/3 GUI
- Ability to map different data formats (XML, variable field lengths)
- Parallel processing of different detail structures

IM/3 Xchange provides additional functionality such as

- Transparent link between SAP R/3 systems and hybrid IT landscapes
- Direct data exchange between R/3 and third-party systems (More than 100 different connectors to operating systems, DBMS and ERP applications)
- World Wide Web connection for e-Business
- Data transfer monitoring