

The making of AstraZeneca

Efficient interface management with IM/3 eases the transition

When Astra and Zeneca merged, the IT department of the new company faced a major challenge: integrating two heterogeneous system environments as rapidly and efficiently as possible. The pharmaceuticals company decided to deploy interface management software in order to reduce the risk of problems during the integration. InterfaceManager IM/3, an EAI (enterprise application integration) solution from REALTECH, has made it easier for AstraZeneca to standardize all interfaces, and has reduced the effort required to maintain permanent interfaces to SAP R/3.

: success story

AstraZeneca GmbH

AstraZeneca 

Ralf Droege,
Head of ERP systems
AstraZeneca GmbH

"IM/3 from REALTECH has saved us a great deal of time and money. Despite working to an extremely tight timetable, we were able to finish ahead of schedule."



Photos courtesy of:
AstraZeneca GmbH


REALTECH
software



Corporate mergers – a major challenge for IT departments

AstraZeneca GmbH was founded on March 1, 2000. It is a subsidiary of AstraZeneca Holding GmbH, together with Promed GmbH (cardiovascular medicines) and Pharma Stern GmbH (respiratory medicine). With revenue of US\$16 billion and 50,000 employees, AstraZeneca is one of the five leading pharmaceutical research companies in Germany.

The integration of two very different corporate cultures was just one of the challenges facing the newly merged company. In addition, "Two heterogeneous IT environments had to be combined into a coherent whole," explains Ralf Droege, AstraZeneca's head of ERP systems. "The most critical aspect was the entire production system, including the warehouse management and picking system. We had to develop more than 30 interfaces between our existing SAP R/3 systems and external systems. This would have been too much to perform manually."

Flexible, user-friendly interface management

To ease the pressure on internal resources, AstraZeneca decided to deploy software to generate and maintain interfaces automatically. The main focus was on the materials management component of SAP R/3 (MM), comprising incoming goods, inventory management, picking, production and sales systems. AstraZeneca's aim was to standardize and homogenize interface programming. The company also wanted integrated problem management functionality that would be capable not only of alerting the system administrator in the event of trouble, but also of actively supporting resolution. For the new solution to stand the test of time, it had to be open to any enhancements or new systems that AstraZeneca might deploy in the future, regardless of platform or vendor.

AstraZeneca used two key criteria to select an IT partner: Geographical proximity to the company and depth of knowledge of SAP. The decision was taken to go with REALTECH, and to deploy IM/3, the company's tried-and-tested SAP-based solution.



AstraZeneca GmbH, plant Plankstadt.

REALTECH's close relationship with SAP, and the expertise of its product consultants, were the icing on the cake for the AstraZeneca project team.

Centralized monitoring of all interface processes

After a four-month planning phase, implementation of IM/3 began in November 1999. Integrating IM/3 with AstraZeneca's existing software and systems caused no problems. Following successful testing of the interfaces generated by IM/3, it took less than a day to install them in the production system. Two employees currently work with the software, monitoring all interface processes from a central location.

"The usability of IM/3 has particularly impressed us," comments Ralf Droege. "All interfaces are generated and maintained

automatically – which allows us to increase efficiency in planning and deploying human resources. We have a single view of all interfaces and data-exchange mechanisms, and can analyze and correct them where necessary."

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