

SAP add-on for providers of international connectivity solutions

Optimize supply chain processes with transparency

The development of high-performance copper and glass fiber systems is progressing rapidly worldwide. More and more countries are investing in high-quality communication networks in order to keep pace with advancing globality. Producers of these connectivity solutions rely on the seamless functioning of supply chain management and its processes. Transparency is critical, especially in cross-plant and cross-location supply chains spanning different production lines. In order to better meet the demands placed on the SAP-controlled logistics processes, an information and communication technology company requested a practical and effective add-on for the standard system. Today, a number of GIB software modules provide the company with an improved overview of the current planning situation and enable them to respond quickly in critical situations.

Reichle & De-Massari AG (R&M) has been one of the world's leading providers of cabling and connectivity solutions for high-end communication networks since 1964. A global network of over 40 subsidiaries and 10 production facilities is run from the Swiss headquarters in Wetzikon. The R&M cabling and connectivity solutions for high-end communication networks are supplied to a wide range of industries in the areas of local area networks, data centers and public networks. As a result, the company makes a vital contribution to operational security in voice, data and video transmission.

Objective: To achieve transparency with regard to the planning situation and easy rollout for new plants

R&M produces more than 2000 different products in sectors including fiber optics, twisted pair cabling, automated infrastructure management, VS distribution systems and 19" cabinets. The company generates over 80 percent of its sales abroad. It is clear that the logistics of producing so many items and maintaining precise production and delivery schedules can place extremely high demands on supply chain management. "The complexity and the certain degree of difficulty caused by the condition and evaluation of the data prompted us to look for a new software solution. SAP APO lacked flexibility and transparency and we also had problems with the interface between SAP ECC and SAP APO," recalls Jeffrey Archer, Corporate Business Systems Manager (SAP CC management).

After some research, they eventually chose GIB from Siegen, which specializes in the optimization of logistical processes in SAP. The deciding factor was that the SAP-certified GIB Suite could be seamlessly integrated into SAP without the need for additional hardware, and that it met all the requirements set out by R&M: The new solution needed to provide more transparency and be tailored to the needs of the company, without unnecessary and complex functionalities. It was also crucial that the solution could be rolled out to new plants and locations quickly and with minimum effort. "In addition to the costs, the transparency and user-friendliness of the software were also key considerations," says Jeffrey Archer.

Introductory phase and individual adjustments

The joint project was launched in March 2017 and successfully completed in January of the following year. The solution was then rolled out to the national subsidiaries by April 2018, so that the old system could be decommissioned in May. As expected, the biggest challenge during the implementation period was to replace the SAP APO production planning process with GIB. A decision was made to equip one plant at a time with the new solution; While this naturally led to slight delays due to limited test data, it was a success thanks to extensive communication and employee involvement.

The company also used the implementation period as an opportunity to satisfy an important requirement for the new supply chain management solution. The aim was to align the software more closely with R&M's daily process operations and various adjustments and expansions were performed. Using the GIB Planning module, a solution was developed that could map the company-specific approach to production planning (including capacity planning with two-tier workplace structures). The GIB Forecast module currently fulfills the function of collecting and correctly aggregating the transaction data. The software is now used by 170 members of staff worldwide at sites in Switzerland, Poland, Bulgaria, Germany, USA and the United Arab Emirates.

Thanks to the training courses and the closely monitored introductory phase, the response from users has been positive — which in turn improves the usability of the solution. R&M plans to continue working with the GIB Suite when SAP is updated to the S/4HANA generation. In the meantime, R&M and GIB are working on improving the system performance in the DCP area.

Better able to respond on the basis of available data

"Since our daily processes are carried out on an international scale, these processes have to be coordinated. The introduction of the new software has given us an improved overview of the current planning situation in the different production locations. This enables us to respond more quickly to critical situations, such as material availability, capacities, etc., and thus

achieve even better planning results," says Jeffrey Archer. We were delighted to have a new solution ready for use in additional locations in a timely manner. In the first nine months after launching the solution, we included two further production plants in the SAP rollout. Added benefit: The use of the new add-on has reduced the need for SAP support.

Thanks to the SAP-certified GIB Suite, Reichle & De-Massari AG has optimized its logistical processes and thus improved its supply capability. The transparency offered by the solution facilitates centralized, cross-plant control of individual departments and makes the entire group of companies more efficient as a whole. Critical decisions can be made more quickly on the basis of the available data while simultaneously reducing costs.

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