

SAP Customer Success Story Utilities – Gas and Electricity Generation and Distribution



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Esther Hehne, HR Manager, Essent N.V.

AT A GLANCE

Company

- Name: Essent N.V.
- Location: Arnhem, Netherlands
- Industry: Utilities
- Products and services: Gas and electricity generation and distribution
- Revenue: €6.4 billion (2006)
- Employees: 10,650
- Web site: www.essent.eu
- Implementation partners: Real Support; Superp B.V.; and Perfect for People

Challenges and Opportunities

- An expanding employee base
- Increasing competition

Objective

Increase the quality of HR-related services by introducing an employee interaction center (EIC)

SAP® Solution and Services

EIC functionality available with the SAP® ERP and SAP Customer Relationship Management applications

Implementation Highlight

Completion of customizations and system setup within 2 months

Why SAP

- Flexible integration with the SAP ERP Human Capital Management solution
- Familiar and reliable platform

Benefits

- Easy distribution of workload
- Streamlined processing of queries and change requests from employees, managers, and HR advisers
- Structured contact management
- Transparent reporting

Existing Environment

- SAP ERP Human Capital Management
- SAP NetWeaver® Portal component
- SAP Employee Self-Service and SAP Manager Self-Service applications
- SAP ERP Financials solution
- SAP Supplier Relationship Management application

Third-Party Integration

- Database: IBM DB2 (test environment); Oracle (production environment)
- Hardware: IBM
- Operating system: UNIX

ESSENT

Utilities Company Increases HR Service Quality with SAP® Employee Interaction Center Functionality

In order to maintain its leading position in the deregulated and highly competitive energy market – and to accommodate an expanding employee base – Essent N.V. needed to consolidate its personnel administration processes and enhance HR-related services for both internal and external employees. After a speedy implementation of the employee interaction center (EIC) functionality available with the SAP® ERP and SAP Customer Relationship Management applications, the energy company was able to realize its goals within two months.

With annual revenues of €6.4 billion (2006), Essent is the largest energy company in the Netherlands. It specializes in the generation, transport, trade, and supply of gas and electricity to residential consumers and businesses of all sizes. Although the Netherlands is its home base, Essent has built up a significant market position in Germany and is expanding its operations in Belgium. It employs conventional generating resources such as coal-fired power plants as well as renewable resources such as wind energy and biomass.

A Challenging Process

At Essent, personnel administration is no small task – especially since the company employs 10,000 people in multiple offices and has been through several internal reorganizations, with more expected in the near future.

“In the run-up before salary payments, our department was a well-oiled incident machine, rolling from one telephone call to the other,” says Esther Hehne, HR manager at Essent. “However, we wanted to get to a place where the HR admin employees could do their jobs relatively easily and not be disrupted by all the questions coming at them. This meant we needed to automate as many activities as possible and revamp our processes.” To achieve this, the Arnhem-based company chose to introduce an employee interaction center.

Hehne continues, “We wanted to complete the implementation of a new system within two months – which meant there was no time for a lengthy orientation. But, because we were already successfully using the SAP ERP Human Capital Management solution, the interface was easy to establish.” Essent also chose to simultaneously reorganize several business units to better align them with the new processes, so the HR department was expecting a lot of questions. “With the interaction center up and running, the additional workload would be easier to deal with,” says Hehne.

Integrated Services

With the help of implementation partners Real Support, Superp B.V., and Perfect for People, Essent integrated the EIC with the existing SAP human resources platform in record time. Peter Dijkstra, project leader with Real Support, says, “Because the SAP software has standard interfaces and supports modular expansion, we hardly had to do any customization. We were also able to easily integrate the data of retired Essent employees into the system. This meant Essent only had to maintain one system.”

Besides centralizing HR management, Essent wanted to make sure that all HR-related information was available through one channel. “If an employee was sick or on holiday, a colleague

could easily take over,” Hehne explains. “Another advantage was that we could distribute the workload more effectively and keep track of all activities.”

Intensive On-Site Support

The interaction center has been well received by Essent employees. “Once we announced the new contact information for HR questions, we soon had 600 queries in our central inbox,” says Hehne. The HR administrative team that processes the information also reacted enthusiastically.

“Users now have one point of access for all information and services regarding pension plans, salaries, and car rentals, for example. This is an ideal situation.”

Esther Hehne, HR Manager, Essent N.V.

“Change is always hard, but thanks to intensive on-site support from the implementation partners, everyone knew how to handle the new tools after a short training period,” says Dijkstra, who then adds, “Employees can use the interaction center via two different user interfaces: the WinClient or the simpler WebClient. Heavy users often prefer WinClient because they like all the available options.”

Clear Advantages

The advantages are clear, according to Hehne. “Until now, changes or requests for information were often done by phone or via internal mail,” she says. “This often led to fragmented information – which resulted in higher costs because a lot of communication was required in order to process data consistently. It was also difficult to make sure the work got done. That’s no longer the case, as our HR employees can now handle many tasks and can react far more flexibly and quickly.”

As an example, in the past, when employees needed answers to certain questions, it generally took HR a long time to get back to them. Says Hehne, “The average employee now receives an answer much quicker, although sometimes someone with a very specific question might have to wait a little longer. However, all questions are prioritized and employees are treated equal, while the administrative colleagues can focus on their core activities. This results in a more efficient and effective HR organization.”

Future Plans

Thanks to the recent SAP interaction center project and superior knowledge transfer, Essent has the tools and experience it needs to expedite implementations of the interaction center in other departments. Future plans include introducing the EIC functionality at the Essent support facility and finance department.

“SAP offers the right tools to prepare us for almost any future changes.”

Esther Hehne, HR Manager, Essent N.V.

Hehne says in conclusion, “One of the best things about the SAP software-based interaction center is that it enables easy communication with other departments and allows us to provide useful, secure information to customers, partners, and employees. Users now have one point of access for all information and services regarding pension plans, salaries, and car rentals, for example. This is an ideal situation. And, what works for HR can also be used for other departments and even for external suppliers. SAP offers the right tools to prepare us for almost any future changes.”

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