



PROFINE

PORTAL-BASED WEB SERVICES WITH SAP NetWeaver® ENABLE ORDER TRACKING

“SAP NetWeaver and the enterprise SOA [service-oriented architecture] concept give us the flexibility we need to handle our international business.”

Thomas Klüppel, Head of IT Management,
profine GmbH

QUICK FACTS

Company

- Name: profine GmbH
- Location: Troisdorf, Germany
- Industry: Mill products – plastics
- Products and services: Plastic profiles for windows, doors, and shutters
- Revenue: €848 million
- Employees: 3,700
- Web site: www.profine-group.com
- Partner: UNIORG Consulting GmbH

Challenges and Opportunities

- Long, labor-intensive sales process for volume of products
- Complex product specification and classification system
- Low customer retention but set growth strategy
- 3 brand-specific product catalogs with cross-selling options but only 1 sales channel

Objective

Provide online customer services for Web-based order tracking and a new online shop with immediate price and availability checks

SAP® Solutions and Services

- SAP NetWeaver® technology platform
- SAP NetWeaver Portal component
- SAP NetWeaver Exchange Infrastructure component
- SAP NetWeaver Application Server component
- Web Dynpro development environment

Implementation Highlight

Project completed in only 6 months

Why SAP

- Power and scalability of the open SAP NetWeaver technology platform, supporting integrated processes
- Future-proof investments in SAP® solutions

Benefits

- Integrated order tracking plus real-time price calculations and availability checks in online shop
- Forward-looking portal technology for flexible and efficient integration of new Web services
- Reduced workload of customer service staff, giving them more time for individual customer consultations
- Increased customer retention through faster quotations and ease of use
- Fast and simple order creation, complete real-time information, and full transparency along the sales and production processes
- Tight integration along value chain with logistics partners and wholesalers

Existing Environment

SAP R/3® software (functionality now found in the SAP ERP application)



Whether you are looking for windows, doors, screens, façades, structural elements, or system solutions, profine GmbH can supply the right product for every need with its KBE, KÖMMERLING, and TROCAL brands. One of these brands is sure to meet the construction challenges and requirements of virtually any customer. Based in Troisdorf, Germany, the company manufactures long-lived, low-maintenance, weather-resistant products, based on rigid PVC with three, four, or five chambers, that comply with all international standards and test certifications.

To remain competitive, profine wanted to transform its long, labor-intensive sales process and complex product specification and classification system into a fast and simple ordering process with complete real-time information and full transparency. The SAP NetWeaver® technology platform provided the components and tools to change the way the business is run.

Expanding in International Markets

With approximately 3,700 employees, profine provides services and support for its customers and partners through a network of 26 locations in 21 countries, stretching from Spain across Russia to China. In addition, the company has a production capacity of more than 450,000 tons of high-quality plastic profiles per year. The company's posted revenues were €848 million in 2006, and its market share is currently 26% in Europe. profine's reputation for innovation plays an important role in enabling it to respond swiftly to new market requirements. For example, profine has developed new technology

for coating window profiles with a photocatalytic layer that makes them almost completely self-cleaning.

Offering Global Customers Real-Time Services

profine's goal was to improve customer retention and automate sales processing to compete with companies that offered less expensive products. With SAP NetWeaver, profine was able to develop new Web services for its three brands. In just six months, the company created an information and purchasing portal that enables customers to track orders in real time and place purchase orders quickly and easily via the Internet. "Transparent processes and higher-quality service increase our customers' confidence in us," says profine's IT manager Thomas Klüppel.

UNIORG Consulting GmbH, located in Dortmund, Germany, supported profine's implementation. Customers throughout Europe can now access the order-tracking applications and online shop using the SAP NetWeaver

Portal component. profine adopted an enterprise service-oriented architecture (enterprise SOA) using SAP NetWeaver, creating many new functions as individual Web services. The services were developed using the Web Dynpro development environment and were based on the SAP NetWeaver Application Server (SAP NetWeaver AS) component. They are integrated in the SAP NetWeaver Portal via iViews (portlets).

Keeping an Eye on Purchase Orders

Customers can use the order-tracking application in the new portal to view all the key information about order quantities, current processing status, and goods issue dates. They can use the bar charts to see the current status of orders and can drill down through the data to obtain more detailed information. "Our customers can see at any time whether the products they have ordered have been produced and when they will be shipped," explains Klüppel. After customers check their orders, they can adjust their production planning schedule so it corresponds with the progress of their order.



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When customers enter the order confirmation number, they can call up orders, input the article number to view the order information at different levels of detail, and select orders by order date. They can also select orders based on the delivery note number or the customer order number, which is generated by the SAP® ERP application. The search functionality works for both standard orders with a delivery charge and orders for goods shipped free of charge, such as samples.

Synchronizing Portal Services and SAP ERP

One of the major challenges of the profine project was to provide real-time price and availability checks for online customers. UNIORG resolved this issue by designing a Web service that synchronizes SAP ERP with the portal database. Now when a customer places

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an order in the online shop, the data is forwarded immediately from the portal to SAP ERP. “This functionality enables profine to make reliable statements about product availability and to automatically provide price calculations in response to customer inquiries,” says Thomas Weber, the UNIORG project lead.

The product portfolios of the three profine brands have been modeled in the new online shop. Each brand has its own individual page layout and profile. Customers who order products from more than one brand are assigned a login for all three brands. When customers log in, the software uses role-based authorization and their customer ID to determine which brands they need to access. “One-brand” customers are immediately directed to their section of the portal after logging in.

Generating Orders Quickly and Easily

Before the implementation, profine had three brand-specific catalogs with selected cross-selling options but only one sales channel. Checking price and availability and ordering products involved a long and complex manual process. Now customers direct the

process of guided selling. They can select items – by brand, customer, and product – from a hierarchically structured product catalog and order them through the new online shop. They can also submit inquiries by entering keywords in a quick search function, or they can look for products by linking specific characteristics. “Many of our smaller customers don’t know our material ID numbers. The online shop helps them find what they’re looking for quickly and easily,” continues Klüppel.

After finding the correct window profile, the customer can call up textual and graphic information about the profile’s characteristics as well as the material ID number. For example, window builders can view the structure of a particular profile as a technical graphic to ensure that it meets their requirements.

Unlike with paper-based procedures, customers can change or delete purchase orders at any time with just a few mouse clicks and keystrokes. They can also save orders – in whole or in part – for future use with a notepad service. “This saves time, because customers who order products on a regular basis don’t need to put their orders together from scratch each time,” explains Klüppel.

Checking Real-Time Price and Availability

When customers place orders, the current price and availability data for the contents of their shopping cart is retrieved from SAP ERP – a Web service enabled by the SAP NetWeaver Exchange Infrastructure (SAP NetWeaver XI) component and SAP NetWeaver AS. As a result, customers place their orders on the basis of up-to-date, real-time data, knowing that the price and product availability are reliable. “We tell customers if there will be a markup for small-volume purchases, which is then automatically included in the price calculations,” adds Klüppel.

Enabling SOAP Services

profine has released selected services as SOAP services to enable customers to leverage the functions through interfaces other than the portal. These services are provided via the Universal Description, Discovery and Integration (UDDI) registry service. Partners and

and the number of customers is growing steadily. profine's customer service representatives are also benefiting: "We can now use the automated portal processes to deal with a lot of inquiries that we used to handle by phone. This frees up our service team and gives them more time to advise customers with special requirements," says



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customers can access them either through their own systems or through a different front end. Dealers can call up pricing functions from their own applications and perform reliable price calculations for profine brand products, for example. Major wholesalers can quickly and easily integrate the functions into their online ordering systems.

Customers with third-party systems can also access the portal services. Since the purchase orders are generated in a different application and forwarded as comma-separated value (CSV) files, customers can put goods in their shopping carts without directly accessing the portal.

Integrating Locations and Partners

Shortly after profine went live, customers from more than 30 companies accessed the order-tracking function and the online shop for each brand,

Klüppel. The portal processes also form the basis for tighter integration of the company's international subsidiaries, many of which use the SAP Business One application.

SAP NetWeaver provides profine with a forward-looking platform that is helping the company to incrementally build a service-oriented IT architecture. profine will leverage this architecture to react with greater agility to new market requirements. The company plans to integrate its logistics partners into the new system and model the supply chain from end to end. "The enterprise SOA concept and SAP NetWeaver offer us exciting new opportunities for collaborating more closely with our customers and partners, such as component suppliers," notes Klüppel.

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