Balluff: A Central Platform for User Management

Tightening Up Authorization Assignment Processes with SAP NetWeaver® Identity Management



Balluff GmbH used to employ a stand-alone application for user management, which made it necessary to manage access authorizations from three separate locations. Now that it has replaced the legacy software with the SAP NetWeaver® Identity Management (SAP NetWeaver ID Management) component, the Swabian company can manage all access authorizations centrally. After it incorporated its complete SAP® software landscape, Balluff determined to include the three Microsoft Active Directories installed at its branch offices.

MANAGE USER IDS ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION IN ONE SAP SOLUTION

Balluff manufactures complex sensors and measurement systems for mechanical engineering companies and is the world leader in a range of product areas. The company employs 2,200 employees in 50 countries.

In the past, the company used Oracle Identity Manager software to manage employee user accounts. But Balluff had little in-house Oracle expertise, and the software was maintained largely by external service providers, which led to high operating costs. Furthermore, the solution was not integrated into the company's SAP software landscape, which necessitated frequent switches between platforms. It also resulted in inefficient processes. The legacy identity management software was not able, for example, to automatically provide a user ID for the HR software. New user names and e-mail addresses had to be manually assigned by the HR officer, and access rights had to be entered individually for each software solution.

To eliminate these inefficiencies, the company decided to manage user identities across the entire organization in one SAP solution, which would also reduce costs and maintenance effort. Because the IT department has extensive SAP expertise and SAP NetWeaver ID Management uses standardized programming languages, the maintenance would be much easier and could be performed in-house. The company expects a return on investment within five years at the latest.





Implementation

A three-person project team from Balluff joined forces with a consultant from SAP Consulting to engage in the implementation project, which was split into two phases. In the first phase, the team mapped functionalities and workflows from the old software to the new solution. In the second phase, new processes were added and existing processes were tightened up.

At project start-up, the team built a test environment in which it mapped all existing processes, including the messaging workflow and generation of e-mail addresses. It tested the processes and, based on the test results, adjusted them. The production environment was then established, and the software adjustments were ported to it. Finally, all software systems to be provisioned with identity management data by SAP NetWeaver ID Management were connected to the production environment.

Because user management had been performed in the individual back-end software systems with the old solution, the consultants created new accounts in SAP NetWeaver ID Management and consolidated the existing data. The process was partially automated. Using a program, the consultants pinpointed duplicate user IDs and entered all the data into a new master data record. Gradually, Balluff integrated all the SAP solutions and one of the three Microsoft Active Directories that held the user records. This covered around 90% of the user profiles. The other two directories continue to be maintained in the branch offices but are slated to be integrated soon. In addition, within six months Balluff established a central platform for complete user management and mapped all processes from the legacy software to the new solution.

During the second implementation phase, existing processes were tightened up. For example, the workflow for notification e-mails in the legacy software had employees in the various departments working with 48 different e-mail templates to send user IDs to colleagues or required information to HR. Today, there is a single dynamic template.

Now, when a new employee joins the company, authorizations can be assigned more quickly. The new user is manually created in the SAP ERP Human Capital Management (SAP ERP HCM) solution. The HR master record is then automatically transferred to SAP NetWeaver ID Management, which sends the corresponding notifications and creates the e-mail address, user name, and profile path for the active directory. The identity management functionality automatically assigns the respective access authorizations. If an employee switches positions within the company, this is recorded in SAP ERP HCM, and SAP NetWeaver ID Management adjusts the authorizations for all integrated software and directories.

Valuable Experience

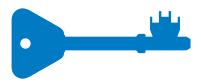
The implementation took place on time and within budget with the external consultant deployment amounting to 25 days in total. The project structure proved efficient. In the first phase, only the legacy software was mapped to the new solution. The new processes were added in the second phase. This was intended to maintain high user acceptance.

The test environment was set up independent of the existing data pool. Because of this lack of data, Balluff underestimated the effort involved in connecting the three separately managed active directories to its new ID management environment. As a result, it began by connecting the active directory located at its headquarters.

Overall, Balluff was able to tighten up its authorization assignment processes using SAP NetWeaver ID Management, which led to lower operating costs compared to the legacy software. The new identity management will be operated solely by internal employees, which means external service providers will no longer be necessary, which will further reduce costs.

HIGHLIGHTS

Balluff was able to integrate all of its software with SAP NetWeaver ID Management – including several active directories across several branch offices. As a result, the company succeeded in streamlining its authorization assignment.



Balluff was able to tighten up its authorization assignment processes using SAP NetWeaver ID Management, leading to lower operating costs compared with the legacy software.

