



“The programming effort required has been reduced, we have lower costs, and we are substantially more flexible.”

Carsten Schmidt, Head of the SAP Competence Center/IT Management,
Mercedes-Benz Accessories GmbH

AT A GLANCE

Company

- Name: Mercedes-Benz Accessories GmbH
- Location: Stuttgart, Germany
- Industry: Automotive
- Products and services: Vehicle accessories for Mercedes-Benz and the Mercedes-Benz Collection of personal items for the Mercedes-Benz, Maybach, SRL McLaren, and smart car series
- Revenue: €300 million
- Employees: 130
- Web site: www.dcmba.de
- Implementation partner: SAP® Consulting and its Global Delivery group

Challenges and Opportunities

- Integrate the system landscape
- Map end-to-end business processes along the value chain
- Adapt to changing business needs without significant programming effort

Objectives

- Simplify the IT landscape
- Reverse previous code modifications to correspond to the standard SAP software and meet new business demands
- Establish a flexible platform to support current and future growth

SAP Solutions and Services

- SAP ERP application
- SAP NetWeaver® Application Server component

Implementation Highlights

- Finalized upgrade in 3 months
- Minimized downtime to avoid day-to-day business disruptions
- Completed project at lower cost and in less time than forecasted

Why SAP

- Range of functions in the latest SAP ERP release
- Innovative SAP platform strategy
- Long-standing successful working relationship with SAP
- High degree of investment security
- Tailored upgrade service and professional support from SAP Consulting
- Remote support from the Global Delivery group of SAP Consulting

Benefits

- Flexible IT platform to facilitate quick adaptations to meet new business requirements
- Reversal of numerous existing code modifications to correspond to the easy-to-maintain standard SAP software
- Lower operating costs due to reduced programming effort
- Foundation for end-to-end process integration

Existing Environment

- Legacy SAP R/3® software (functionality now found in SAP ERP)
- SAP Product Lifecycle Management application

Third-Party Integration

- Database: IBM DB2
- Hardware: IBM AS/400

MERCEDES-BENZ ACCESSORIES

Paving the Way for Future Growth by Upgrading to SAP® ERP

Mercedes-Benz Accessories GmbH (MBA), based in Stuttgart, Germany, develops and markets automotive accessories for Mercedes-Benz vehicles, along with a full line of personal items called the Mercedes-Benz Collection for the Mercedes-Benz, Maybach, and SLR McLaren series. Recently, the wholly owned subsidiary of Daimler AG expanded its product offerings even further to include accessories for the smart car. In all, MBA's 130 employees manage a portfolio of around 10,000 products, ranging from roof rack systems to sunglasses.

With its expansive portfolio of accessories for world-renowned brands, MBA's business requirements have grown significantly since its founding in 2000 – along with its IT requirements. To support its continued growth, the company is relying on the SAP® ERP application to integrate new business processes with greater speed and flexibility. “We have to react to new trends and markets very quickly,” explains Carsten Schmidt, head of the SAP competence center/IT management at MBA. “It is critical for the future to map entire business processes along the value chain. To do this, we need an integrated IT environment.”



End-to-End Mapping of Business Processes

MBA's system landscape was based on SAP R/3® software, whose functionality is found today in SAP ERP. As business demands grew, however, the existing IT environment could no longer provide the full functionality and end-to-end integration needed to meet MBA's requirements. MBA developed its own in-house solutions for many of the missing functions. But the company

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still lacked a controlled, end-to-end product development process and had to manually link license administration and financial processes using Microsoft Excel tables. “It would have been possible to integrate them, but only partly, and it would have cost us a lot of time and effort,” explains Schmidt. In addition, MBA's in-house developments would have gone against an important strategic goal for the company. “We want to realign all the processes along the value chain with standard, easy-to-maintain SAP software,” says Schmidt. “That reduces the programming workload and costs, and makes us substantially more flexible.”

Transparent Costs

It did not take long before MBA found the solution in SAP ERP. In addition to providing the full functionality that the company needed, SAP ERP is powered by the flexible SAP NetWeaver® technology platform – enabling MBA to accommodate changing requirements, achieve end-to-end process integration, and ensure a smooth upgrade. “Everyone was talking about an enterprise

resource planning upgrade,” explains Schmidt. The company decided to team up with SAP Consulting to ensure a quick and painless transition to the latest release of SAP ERP.

MBA's decision to rely on SAP Consulting for the SAP ERP upgrade was based on other crucial factors as well. “SAP offered us a complete package with transparent costs, which meant that there were no uncertainties for us,” says Schmidt. “We have also had some very positive experiences with SAP consultants. They have always provided excellent support. The combination of all these factors convinced me that this was the right decision to make.”

Ahead of Schedule and Below Budget

The upgrade project started in mid-January 2007. After planning the project, the project team identified a complete list of code modifications that MBA had previously made to its legacy SAP R/3 software and recommended which ones should be reversed. The Global Delivery group of SAP Consulting was responsible for technically reversing the modifications. “With its efficient remote support, the Global Delivery group has made a significant contribution to the success of the project,” explains Schmidt.

The actual upgrade took place in mid-April under less than perfect conditions. Not only had the peak season for tires and wheels just begun, but Mercedes-Benz was also celebrating the launch of its new C-Class model. “Any lengthy periods of downtime were simply out of the question,” recalls Schmidt. The upgrade team, however, ensured that such problems never arose. Under its guidance, the upgrade ran smoothly and took place over a weekend to avoid disrupting business activities. The entire upgrade project from initial planning to final launch was completed in just 12 weeks – ahead of schedule and below the forecasted budget.

As Schmidt sums up, “SAP Consulting and its Global Delivery group provided us with very professional support in every phase of the project. A central contact person from SAP Consulting was always on-site. We were kept informed every step of the way. And the defined common goal was always in focus.”

Increased Flexibility to Support Rapid Integration

With its SAP ERP upgrade complete, MBA has gained the agility to keep pace with changing business requirements. “Now we can integrate new business processes faster and more flexibly than before,” explains Schmidt. The company has just recently created XML interfaces to improve product communication.

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Consequently, all Mercedes-Benz subsidiaries now have Web-based access to product master and price data, which they can use for local sales promotions. “By providing the necessary tools, the SAP ERP upgrade considerably facilitated this realization,” adds Schmidt.

MBA is also using SAP ERP and SAP NetWeaver to integrate the complete product development process with controlling and purchasing. This provides managers with a clear overview of the status of each project, along with its related costs and revenues. Going forward, MBA also plans to incorporate license handling into the IT environment. “We have several ideas, and now we can achieve a lot more with a lot less effort,” summarizes Schmidt.

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