

New paths for the marketplaces of businessMart AG.

Overview

■ Challenge

Creation of a scalable open platform for an electronic B2B marketplace

■ Solution

With IBM WebSphere® software, a stable, robust, and secure platform could be found which became the basis of a consistent restructuring into a service oriented architecture

■ Key Benefits

The most important portal functions could be used directly in the software of the portal user. The labor expenditure for unclear order positions was minimized thanks to the possibility of real-time correction



To connect an increasing number of subscribers to its portal-based transaction system, businessMart AG adopted a service oriented architecture solution powered by WebSphere software from IBM.

Young and successful

businessMart AG was founded in February 2000 and currently employs a workforce of twenty-eight. businessMart conceives and realizes electronic marketplaces and e-business systems for commerce, industry and handicraft in sectors with catalog-based articles. Measurable improvements and savings are achieved with the consistent orientation to the sector processes of its customers and to the in-depth integration of the computer systems of the suppliers and customers.

“The primary success factor for a B2B marketplace is to build and model complex electronic business processes running parallel without a bottleneck. The immense, high functionality of the WebSphere platform gives us the flexibility to scale.”

– Thies Frahm, COO, businessMart AG

Simplifying the integration process and reducing error

Key Components

Software

- IBM DB2® Universal Database™
- IBM WebSphere Application Server
- IBM WebSphere Business Integration Server Foundation
- IBM WebSphere MQ
- IBM WebSphere Studio Application Developer - Integration Edition
- SUSE LINUX® Enterprise Edition V8.1

The broad spectrum of services from businessMart ranges from conception through technology modules all the way to the founding of independent, market-leading portal operating companies. businessMart now carries out the ordering processes of more than sixty suppliers with nearly 3,000 customers and more than 25,000 orders per day. businessMart currently operates two sector portals, and additional projects are in preparation.

Better integration—but how?

The continuous growth of the portals gives businessMart AG increased transaction revenues and clear growth in subscribers. Accordingly, more and more outside systems have to constantly be connected to the portal. The decisive head start in technology—the far-reaching integration of the computer systems of suppliers and customers into the portal—was to be expanded even further to be able to be converted substantially more economically. businessMart went in search of a solution which would significantly simplify the interface management and provide a reliable, flexible and easily controllable platform for the exchange of business process information.

Conversion of the architecture

businessMart conceived a service oriented architecture (SOA) and implemented it throughout the entire portal. Within that context, the technology components were corrected in independent individual modules, so-called “services”. With them, business processes no longer had to be conducted through the bottleneck of a portal center, but rather could be processed in parallel in the allocated modules. The architecture uses IBM middleware to connect the customer systems with the available applications. In that regard, a central interface is employed for all of the portal components. The use of the component architecture makes a significantly faster development possible. The computer systems of new clients may now be integrated just as quickly as separate modules. What is created are thus efficient and reusable application modules. The result is software maintenance and care that is significantly more economical. In addition, the consistent use of fallback rules ensures that the system stability is not threatened by the failure of a single (outside) component.

The advantage of the new solution

The decisive additional value arises for the customers of businessMart AG, however, through the now unrestricted transferability of individual portal services to outside software systems. The most important portal functions can now also be used directly in the customers' usual software via Web service interfaces. In order to call up product details with pictures, exploded diagrams, operating instructions, or even supplier searches, the customer no longer needs to exit his or her own merchandise information computer system. These portal services are seamlessly integrated into the software and passed on online from the portal. The customers of businessMart profit from faster and more comprehensive possibilities for intervention: Time-consuming, manual information processes were digitized and have thus been made more economical.

For the integration of the customers' various back-end systems, businessMart uses the IBM WebSphere technology with IBM WebSphere Business Integration Server Foundation and IBM WebSphere MQ. Among other things, sixteen different SAP systems are connected to this. Marketplace participants now can simplify the flow of information, as well as increase their sales and reduce their procurement costs.

In e-business, the contribution margin killers are unclear order positions that generate manual questions by telephone and annoyances through wasting time. It is especially this step which can now be processed significantly more efficiently through the portal: If the system recognizes an obsolete article number, an unclear entry of a packing unit, or even a format error, the supplier or the customer is contacted in real time. They can immediately remedy the problem by themselves directly in the portal through a correction or through the creation of a conversion rule.



Subscribers can correct inaccuracies in the order system themselves and thus reduce the number of time-consuming phone calls they have to make.

The technology behind the portal

In order to convert the integration platform, the robust WebSphere software platform was used. The following components are used with this:

- *IBM WebSphere Application Server is used as the Java™ 2 Platform, Enterprise Edition (J2EE) application server in connection with IBM WebSphere Business Integration Server Foundation as the integration server under SUSE LINUX Enterprise Edition V8.1, which at the same time executes the processes with the Business Process Choreographer under BPEL (Business Process Execution Language) and makes Web services available. IBM WebSphere MQ supports the communication between the portal and the various systems of the clients.*
- *IBM DB2 Universal Database functions as an SQL database for the business process engine and the Web services of the application servers. IBM WebSphere Studio Application Developer - Integration Edition offers a robust Eclipse-based development environment. The integrated Business Process Choreographer allows a comfortable graphic conversion of business processes through the use of the BPEL standard. In addition, the WebSphere Studio Application Developer offers comprehensive support for Web services.*

Well equipped for the future

With the transfer of the portal functions to the systems of the customers and suppliers, the first step was taken in the expansion of the business model. In the future, companies will no longer exchange their order information only by means of contacts, but rather they will allocate applications and have joint access directly to IT services. A portal will have to take over the role of the interface management in order to keep the complexity at an acceptable level for the market partner. While in search of a modern technology base, businessMart at the same time also found an engine for an evolutionary step.

For more information

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