



Steyer Textilservice

Bringing Enterprise Resource Planning to the internet

Challenge

Steyer Textilservice needed to provide defined users with fast and secure web access to relevant data from its AS/400 business processes

Solution

➤ Micro Focus OnWeb®

Steyer Textilservice

From its headquarters in Saxony, Germany, Steyer Textilservice provides cleaning services on an industrial scale. The company delivers comprehensive work clothing cleaning services and laundry for over 2000 customers including hotels and hospitals. Every day, Steyer washes, dries, irons, repairs – where necessary – folds, sorts, assembles and packages around 15 tons of laundry before shipping it back to customers.

Each individual item has a washable tag bearing a printed bar code, which is scanned in the sorting process to ensure that the finished laundry is always assembled correctly. The code is used to determine where parts of the company’s professional clothing range are at any time: with the customer, in transport or at the washing facility. This process tracks around 14,000 individual items every day and therefore requires a high-performance IT system.

Highly tailored ERP system meets company requirements

Originally written in RPG/COBOL, the company’s enterprise resource planning system has undergone numerous adjustments over time. It is a valuable corporate asset and continuous improvement has tailored the solution to meet the company’s specific requirements, and there were no immediate plans to move to a Windows platform. As Christiane Babatz, CEO of Steyer Textil says, “We have a stable, individual solution that we can use to set ourselves apart from the competition.” At the same time, it is important that adjustments and modifications can be made to the software by the solution provider, and at short notice.

New requirements call for new solutions

Despite this loyalty to its computing systems, the company recognized the need to adapt its enterprise resource planning system to meet the challenges of changing customer requirements. Customers expected ongoing access to the service provider’s applications. Previously, customer advisors provided information and took over standard tasks including registering and deregistering new customer employees, booking new facilities and handling complaints.

Highlights

- Web-based ERP prototype delivered in two days
- No change to underlying ERP
- No reprogramming needed
- New contract won on the strength of OnWeb

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Christiane Babatz,
 CEO, Steyer Textilservice GmbH

During the process of bidding for a new contract, Christiane Babatz was confronted with the fact that the potential customer wanted to deal with such matters through a web interface. Babatz explains, "The advantage is clear: the customer would have its own 24-hour open access to the information from the enterprise resource planning system that it considered important, independent of the customer advisor's availability. For us, the problem was not only technical feasibility, but also that we had to offer this option within just a few days if we wanted to participate in the bid."

In its search for a rapid solution, Steyer discovered the OnWeb tool from Micro Focus which provided the answer. OnWeb is middleware that makes it possible to integrate host systems in web applications. Because OnWeb retrieves the necessary data directly from the available screens, the application does not need to be modified. "In this way, we were able to avoid programming interfaces completely, which would have held us up far too long with this particular project," Babatz says. "Within two days of working with Micro Focus, we were able to create a working prototype that showed us, and most importantly, the customer, that the solution would satisfy the requirements perfectly."

Steyer went on to win the contract and provide the new customer with controlled access to data from the enterprise resource planning system, and deliver a productive solution within just a few days using OnWeb.

The investment paid off beyond expectations, and led to other customers using the new web interface. As a result, they not only receive faster access to the data they require but also access evaluations and reports via the web instead of in lists. "It is evident that the system operates stably in production," Babatz observes. "What amazed us is that the project was completed so quickly and without an extensive lead time."

The OnWeb technical solution

The integration of the IBM AS/400/iSeries at Steyer Textilservice was brought about by the use of the OnWeb server. Reusable services were created on this system and used by the web application. Two different techniques are used for communication with the AS/400:

- Screen-based services, which work on the basis of an automated 5250 session and communicate with the AS/400
- Direct access to the DB2/400 for direct data queries

The screen-based services approach means that pre-existing business logic can be used on the AS/400, without the need for reprogramming. Direct database access on the DB2/400 is faster and is used for queries without logic and for read access on the AS/400. The new web application was developed in Java based on Tomcat and communicates with the OnWeb services. These services integrate the AS/400 into a modern web environment. The services do not need to be self-sufficient and can be used by other web applications. For security, the web application data is transferred in encrypted form and Steyer uses a browser that offers the SSL encryption method to facilitate an encrypted network connection between server and browser.

The company plans to use OnWeb technology for other tasks, such as linking data from the enterprise resource planning system with a new CRM system. And, of course, they would like to implement this without spending time programming interfaces. "Our previous experiences with OnWeb make us very optimistic about this new project," concludes Babatz.

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Christiane Babatz,
CEO, Steyer Textilservice GmbH

About Micro Focus

Micro Focus, a member of the FTSE 250, provides innovative software that allows companies to dramatically improve the business value of their enterprise applications. Micro Focus Enterprise Application Modernization, Testing and Management software enables customers' business applications to respond rapidly to market changes and embrace modern architectures with reduced cost and risk.

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