

10 Optimising business processes

Our day-to-day work and tomorrow's business require more and more mobility, not only for employees but also business enterprises. Even though a small company probably will not immediately conduct business internationally, its regional borders will continue to expand, quite autonomously. Companies are focusing increasingly on their core competencies and hire their own specialists exclusively for these business areas. Alliances with other companies are becoming more and more important. Ad hoc project teams with specialists from other companies are being formed and adapted as required. Geographic borders play only a small role in these initiatives.

Mobile phones and Pocket PCs that enable mobile communications are now standard tools used by almost everyone and are taken for granted. The Internet offers a wealth of opportunities to successfully break through regional borders.

Communication between corporate headquarters and the outside sales force

A successful, effective outside sales force must always have an office close at hand - it is no longer enough to have a well-equipped office at home or at company headquarters. A mobile office that automatically synchronises data between a PC/laptop and an Internet server enables salespeople to:

- Process e-mails any time and anywhere
- Keep track of to-do lists
- Administer appointments
- Access an address book listing their contacts

Your outside sales team has easy access to individual program and administration areas via the Internet – from anywhere, anytime and each salesperson on the road is able to stay up-to-date.

Company headquarters also benefits from this efficient work process. Staff at headquarters knows when the outside salespeople have appointments and can send them important documents at any time. This enables headquarters to actively support outside sales in carrying out its assignments and helps generate additional sales. This is a recipe for success that any company can afford and is no longer merely a vision.

Communication and knowledge management for effective teamwork across regional boundaries

Teamwork is one of the strategic goals of many companies and business areas. A lone wolf is hard to control and does not

adequately share information with others. Know-how transfer as required by the strategic goals is almost impossible.

Pre-requisites for successful teamwork are:

- effective and efficient direction and organisation of the team
- information sharing with all participants

You can ensure that each individual employee has the required knowledge about appointments, tasks, data, documents, addresses and contacts by using an appropriate communications platform (intranet) and an organisational tool for project groups, teams and departments. In this type of controlled system, you can decide which users are authorised to process which documents and databases, who has read-only authorisation and who is responsible for submitting comments or supplementary information. Because you have access to archived discussions, the progress of the project can also be reconstructed at a later date. This allows employees to become involved in projects even at an advanced stage. Because they are able to communicate via the intranet, project teams can work together effectively and achieve good results independent of time and place.

Having an intranet is no longer exclusively a requirement for large companies with deep pockets. Small and medium-sized companies can lease turnkey custom intranet solutions for a double-digit fee per month. No expert knowledge or extensive training is required.

Say goodbye to double data maintenance - improving business success by linking an Internet shop to the ERP (enterprise resource planning) system

You have barely completed the successful implementation of the long-awaited ERP system within the company, when the marketing and sales departments recommend that the existing order processes also be available via the Internet shop. The idea is tempting. A new sales channel will generate additional sales. But how do you avoid

double data management and endless maintenance? And how do you use the increased efficiency of the business process to not only increase sales, but also profitability?

When ERP system data is automatically integrated into an Internet shop, even stock availability and lead times are available to customers when they place an order.

There is no real major investment required to integrate an ERP system with an Internet shop, provided the Internet shop has a BMEcat interface (standard defined by the eBusiness Standardisation Committee for the electronic transmission of product-related data). This universal interface is suitable for linking all types of systems and ensures proper exchange of information between an ERP system and an Internet shop. It is independent of the brand of ERP system a company uses. Since Internet shopping in particular requires a high degree of security and reliability, the ordering information shown on the website is also very critical. Therefore, you should make absolutely sure that the Internet shop system you select includes a BMEcat interface. Even though you may not need it right away, it helps secure your investment in the short term.

Summary

Optimising business processes

- Use the Internet to break through your company's regional barriers, establish teams and to successfully execute projects across regional boundaries.
- The Internet offers outstanding opportunities, particularly for an outside sales force. Your sales employees can download the latest data to their portable computing device from a

central location and are always kept up-to-date, anytime, anyplace.

- Small and medium sized companies should also be using an intranet as a tool – professional total solutions can be leased for a double-digit fee per month.
- A BMEcat universal interface provides you with a secure way to automatically exchange data between an ERP system and your Internet shop, thereby eliminating double data management and maintenance.