



## Connecting suppliers to the in-house ERP system

In order to offer its top suppliers an easy, quick and uncomplicated exchange of data, Fliesen-Zentrum Deutschland GmbH has decided to connect its suppliers' systems to the in-house ERP system. With the inubit BPM-Suite not only the data exchange with suppliers can be automated, but also internal processes. The automatic order processing is expected to noticeably disburden the order acceptance.



### About Fliesen-Zentrum Deutschland GmbH

With 400 employees and an annual turnover of 90 million Euros, the Fliesen-Zentrum Deutschland GmbH belongs to the leading wholesale traders of tiles in Germany. The family-owned enterprise was founded in 1895 and has subsidiaries in Trier, Leipzig, Magdeburg and Erfurt, and offers services all over Germany for more than 4,000 customers in handicraft and specialized trade for tiles.

The five subsidiaries of the wholesale trader from Trier, Germany supply approximately 4,000 customers with an assortment of 120,000 articles. The purchasing department currently has 20 employees who have constant contact to their vendors to guarantee a sufficiently stocked warehouse stock.

### Requirements

For more than 300 suppliers, an electronic exchange of data and documents was to be established:

- ▶ Introduction of a standard software that integrates the variety of systems and data formats
- ▶ Orders, invoices, and dispatch notifications were to be exchanged from system to system rather than by telephone, fax, or mail

### Approach

The concrete realization of the project was done with the Professional Edition of the inubit BPM-Suite. It allows processing of incoming integration tasks in parallel by preconfigured workflows:

- ▶ Connection of the ERP system via a BaaN specific export-interface with the inubit BPM-Suite
- ▶ Connection of various suppliers via EDIFACT and openTRANS
- ▶ In the line with the later migration to SAP R/3: changeover from the previous BaaN-interface to the SAP-interface

### Achieved Results

After initial support by the inubit staff, the IT team of the Fliesen-Zentrum was able to conduct the connection of the suppliers on its own:

- ▶ EDI data as well as XML based data formats and messages such as BMEcat and openTRANS can be exchanged
- ▶ Already existing interfaces can be displayed in a single tool. This makes service and maintenance more concise and easy.
- ▶ Additional automation of internal business processes
- ▶ Built-up of an online portal for electronic order processing

A few years ago the Fliesen-Zentrum pursued the idea to exchange orders, invoices, and dispatch notifications with the most important vendors from system to system rather than by telephone, fax, or mail. The problem: business partners had to be connected to the internal ERP system. However, manually programming of interfaces was out of question – the variety of systems and data formats of 300 vendors was too large.

### Integration of systems and suppliers

In search of adequate integration software the inubit BPM-Suite was also tested, and it was convincing: “The enormous flexibility of the software tool was decisive for the choice”, said Hendrik Sprejz, IT-Director of Fliesen-Zentrum.

Together with the team of the Fliesen-Zentrum inubit connected the ERP system via a BaaN specific export-interface with the inubit BPM-Suite. In 2005 the decision for the migration to SAP was made. Due to the modular structure of the inubit BPM-Suite the changeover from the previous BaaN-interface to the SAP-interface was shortly realized. For the business partners of Fliesen-Zentrum this modification did not result in any variations – the already productive communication channels have been retained unchanged.

### Step-by-step implementation of the inubit BPM-Suite

As a pilot scheme, the SAP R/3 system of the Ulm-based Uzin Utz AG, was integrated via an EDIFACT interface. Since this company is absolutely convinced of EDI, all documents are now exchanged in the format EDIFACT D96.A. For further companies, e. g. PCI, Ardex, Villeroy & Boch, as well as Deutsche Steinzeug the integration via EDIFACT and openTRANS was realized.

Hendrik Sprejz: “When we connected the first vendor we were learning from inubit’s consultants but after few days we were able to connect all further vendors without any help”. According to Sprejz the employment of the integration software has already paid off by the integration of the suppliers: “If we had programmed all connections to our vendors by ourselves the project would probably not have been realized in that short time and would have cost a lot more – and the migration from BaaN to SAP in such an unproblematic way had never been occurred without the inubit BPM-Suite.

And apart from that we now have the possibility to realize further integration projects easily, quickly, and securely.”



Markus Friedrich,  
Managing Director

“The application of the inubit BPM-Suite enables us to further improve internal workflows and to design more efficient processes.”

By using the multi-purpose utilizable BPM-Suite of inubit, Fliesen-Zentrum is now in possession of a standardized software whereby diverse processes could be optimized and automated. Therefore the inubit BPM-Suite is already implemented in various fields of the company.

### Connection of suppliers

The concrete realization of the project was done with the Professional Edition of the inubit BPM-Suite. It allows processing of incoming integration tasks in parallel by preconfigured workflows. To connect the inubit BPM-Suite to the BaaN IV system, the BaaN specific Bemis interface was used exporting data from the system into a special EDI version. In the line with the migration to SAP R/3 it was substituted by SAP-interfaces. The project was realized together with the IT-team of the Fliesen-Zentrum Deutschland GmbH. Furthermore employees of the Fliesen-Zentrum had an one-day training at the inubit Training Center. Integration experts from inubit supported setting up the first connections. Now the IT-team is able to connect suppliers on their own.

Hendrik Sprejz summarizes: “We can now exchange EDI data as well as XML based data formats and messages like BMEcat and openTRANS”. A further advantage: “The existing internal interfaces are displayed in a single tool. Thus service and maintenance is considerably concise and easier”.

### Automation of internal processes

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Besides the external business processes there are numerous in-house processes which were automated with the inubit BPM-Suite. For example, so far it was only possible to handle EDIFACT messages with invalid article numbers by dint of complex and paper-based processes. Today all relevant information were extracted and via e-mail in PDF-format provided to the responsible customer advisor. As a further step it is planned to extend this process by a portal, so that faulty data could be corrected online and afterwards transferred automatically to the SAP system.

### Electronic order processing

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“After we connected the most important vendors, we now want to further simplify the order processing”, so Managing Director Markus Friedrich.

A year ago a list of the assortment was presented in the Internet that contained general product and pricing information. The orders however, were made the conventional way. Now the online catalog will be extended to a real online shop that will enable customers to order immediately. Therefore the catalogs of suppliers which are existent in different formats (e. g. BMEcat, DATANORM or PRICAT) were electronically processed as well.

Friedrich: “Now, our customers have the advantage of accessing actual information, products, sales discounts, or stock at any time. We expect that ordering by mouse-click will disburden our order acceptance noticeably.”