



Enterprise Portal: Basis for Transparent Query Processing

To ensure that the interaction between the sales, administration, consulting and costing departments is carried out with the required transparency as well as to ensure the traceability of customer queries, KSM Castings wanted to replace their Excel-based process implementation and reduce data redundancies by means of integration with SAP. In addition to SAP as the leading system, KSM decided to introduce a portal solution based on the inubit BPM-Suite.



About KSM Castings GmbH

KSM Castings Group is a global partner of the automotive industry for aluminum and magnesium products. With focus on the chassis, body and power train business areas, the company group concentrates on customer requirements. It offers customers tailor-made solutions: from design to factory planning, as a system supplier for chassis, body and power train, as a tool supplier and logistics coordinator. Based on decades of international experience and thanks to its technological expertise, it can develop highly complex components and systems in direct contact with the automotive industry and execute the whole production process from casting to system assembly.

Requirements

To create a uniform solution for processing incoming customer queries, the following requirements had to be met:

- ▶ SAP as the leading system for all future processes
- ▶ One-time and database-supported entry of data, consistent availability across all process levels
- ▶ Integration of a new portal solution for certain queries and subprocesses that is linked to SAP and uses data in an integrative manner and supplements it
- ▶ Workflows for process-controlled triggering of user interactions

Approach

The new portal on the basis of the inubit BPM-Suite supports the international portlet standard JSR168 in order to be able to operate applications in different environments. In the context of the integration, the following steps were implemented:

- ▶ Setup of the business process model (from the global process descriptions to detailed function modules)
- ▶ Design and configuration of requested user interaction
- ▶ Setup of the data model incl. dialog integration of the portal function with SAP
- ▶ Development of the Technical Workflows, link to the process model

Results Achieved

The end-to-end development of the business process model without media discontinuity and Technical Workflows within a platform quickly produced results:

- ▶ Bundling and management of all information required for costing by the departments and staff involved in the process via the portal platform
- ▶ Integration of Excel worksheets in SAP to preserve costing in the previous environment and the investment in the previous procedure
- ▶ Flexible adjustability through easy configuration of business processes

“Due to the changed requirements and increasing complexity as well as the necessity to create a company-wide uniform solution for processing incoming queries from our customers in the automotive industry, we decided to fundamentally restructure our processes in 2006,” notes Horst Esser, Manager of IT Application Systems at KSM Castings GmbH.

The starting point was that the Excel-based process implementation was not able to guarantee sufficient transparency and traceability of queries in the interaction of all departments from sales, administration and controlling to costing. In addition, the required integration with SAP was missing, which resulted in data redundancies and significant additional expenses. It was also not possible to use a workflow to control the flow.

A project team analyzed and defined the core requirements for the new procedure. This produced the following requirements:

- ▶ SAP should be the leading system for all future processes.
- ▶ Data should be entered only once and with database support and be available uniformly across all process levels.
- ▶ For certain queries and partial processes, a portal solution that uses all technical possibilities was envisioned; this solution was to be coupled with SAP and use and supplement data integratively.
- ▶ The individual subprocesses should be supported by a workflow that triggers user interactions in a process-controlled manner and helps improve transparency.
- ▶ All departments and staff involved in the process should collect and manage the information required for creating costing via this portal platform.
- ▶ The new platform should be developed on the basis of the latest procedures and be available on the intranet as well as on the internet for those responsible for key accounts. Support of international portlet standard JSR168 must be ensured so that the application can be operated in different application server environments.
- ▶ It must be possible to integrate the legacy Excel sheets directly into SAP to ensure costing in the usual environment and save the investment in the previous procedure.

KSM Castings commissioned B & S Consulting to analyze the requirements and plan the corresponding business process models:

- ▶ Structure of the business process model as a top-down process model from the global process description down to detailed function models
- ▶ Design and configuration of user interactions under consideration of the functional specifications and the business process design
- ▶ Setup of the data model incl. dialog integration of portal functions to SAP
- ▶ Development of Technical Workflows and direct linkage of these to the business process model

“Based on the requirement catalog and the previous project implementation, we quickly recognized that the implementation of the portal solution based on inubit BPM-Suite represented the most innovative and flexible option to realign this part of the processes.”

Horst Esser, Manager of IT Application Systems

Thanks to the possibility of using the Technical Workflows to develop the business process model continuously and without media discontinuity, the project could be implemented and put into the test phase very quickly. “With the inubit BPM-Suite, business processes can be designed and configured and are not hard-coded. This makes it possible to quickly and effectively extend the portal or adapt it to new process requirements,” notes B & S Consulting.

“The decision to implement the project on the basis of the inubit BPM-Suite in cooperation with B & S Consulting has turned out to be absolutely right. It was important to technically implement the new processes but also tap the extensive expertise of B & S Consulting in the planning and structuring of business processes and their integration into our SAP infrastructure. The project execution was characterized by the professional and completely transparent project management of B & S,” notes a satisfied Horst Esser about the successful implementation of the project.

After the successful introduction of the portal solution at the Hildesheim branch, the Radevormwald, Wuppertal, Wernigerode and Hradek, CZ, locations have been integrated operatively since the end of 2007. This had the effect that continuous and transparent query processing were implemented.