

A RELIABLE INTEGRATION PLATFORM FOR COMPANY-WIDE PROCESSES

Challenge

Founded in 1946, SICK AG is a global provider of modern sensor technology with more than 40 subsidiaries, numerous sales agencies and partnerships. This growth has been accompanied by increasing heterogeneity in the company's IT environment. Ensuring seamless communication between these different IT systems was absolutely necessary to guarantee smooth operations and customer satisfaction.

Solution

To achieve this objective, SICK AG decided to implement webMethods integration technology back in 2002 and since then has introduced webMethods Enterprise Service Bus (ESB), (now called webMethods Integration Server), as well as webMethods Trading Networks for B2B integration. The company has also adopted webMethods Business Process Management Suite (BPMS) to increase flexibility in business process modeling.

Benefits

- Round-the-clock operations for global usage
- webMethods handles 20,000 to 50,000 transactions every day from processing orders through the SICK portal to shipping
- High level of scalability with growing data volumes being exchanged
- Improved openness for integrating a wide variety of standard applications
- Greater freedom for individual departments in shaping their B2B communication with customers, suppliers and shipping companies



SICK
Sensor Intelligence.

As a top global provider of sensors and sensor solutions for industrial applications, SICK is a technology and market leader in automation for factories, logistics and processes. SICK currently employs more than 5,000 employees worldwide. The company's success stems from its strong focus on international growth markets as well as SICK's outstanding application expertise—customer demands are viewed as a challenge and solutions are developed jointly with the customers.

Get There Faster.™

“Over several years and through many reviews, webMethods has proven itself as a reliable integration platform that forms a stable **backbone for future projects in business process management.”**

Carsten Trapp | CIO and Executive Board Member | SICK AG

Efficient business processes for a leading high-tech provider

Whether barcode or RFID scanners, optoelectronic security systems, solutions for analysis and process measurement technologies or laser technology for unmanned transport systems—thousands of companies now use SICK’s leading global sensor technologies and solutions to improve the efficiency and robustness of their manufacturing processes and, thereby, improve their own competitiveness as well. Around 600 employees at R&D locations in Europe, the Far East and the U.S. are working on ensuring sensor intelligence and expanding the company’s competitive lead by developing sensors that not only detect things but also manage processes intelligently and communicate with other components in complex networks.

Integrating heterogeneous IT systems

Business IT plays a strong supporting role in this context emphasizes CIO and Executive Board Member Carsten Trapp at SICK AG. This holds particularly true regarding the growing heterogeneity in the company’s IT environment, which SICK AG needs to master as a globally active company.

The high-tech provider from Waldkirch near Freiburg, Germany has relied on Software AG’s webMethods product suite since 2002. “webMethods is the central data hub that runs our entire data exchange between the different internal and external IT systems from procurement to production, logistics to sales,” explains Trapp.

Taking the SICK AG Partner Portal that is currently available for customers from Europe and North and Central America as an example, webMethods incorporates the following systems to execute a business process beginning with checking availability and placing an order, through order processing and conclusion: the publication database for a product catalog containing around 5,000 items; the central ERP system used by production locations; the decentralized ERP systems used by SICK AG’s sales organizations in Europe and the USA; and further external systems such as that of the German customs agency.

webMethods processes between 20,000 and 50,000 transactions as part of this process every day, and SICK AG expects those volumes to increase. One reason for that forecast: a new CRM system being introduced successively by the SICK Group and integrated into the IT landscape using webMethods.

High priority for the topic of integration

“Unlike many other companies, the top management at SICK AG understands very clearly the importance of integration for smooth operations and customer satisfaction,” notes Trapp. A look at the IT organization makes that obvious: In the company’s IT organization, which is separated into the areas of “Plan” (for strategy and architecture), “Build” (for engineering and customizing) and “Run” (for operations), webMethods is located within the “Run” area under project manager Christian Rost. But there aren’t really departmental “borders” here. Employees from the operations area can also take on the role of an engineer and vice versa. “That makes it clear, for example, what needs to go into a development project so it runs in operations later,” comments Rost.

In addition, SICK AG recently invested heavily in its IT environment availability, establishing distributed data centers and running several webMethods Integration Servers on separate platforms.

According to Rost, webMethods Broker serves as a messaging backbone, ensuring secure messaging and playing an important role together with webMethods Integration Servers to distribute loads and improve system availability.

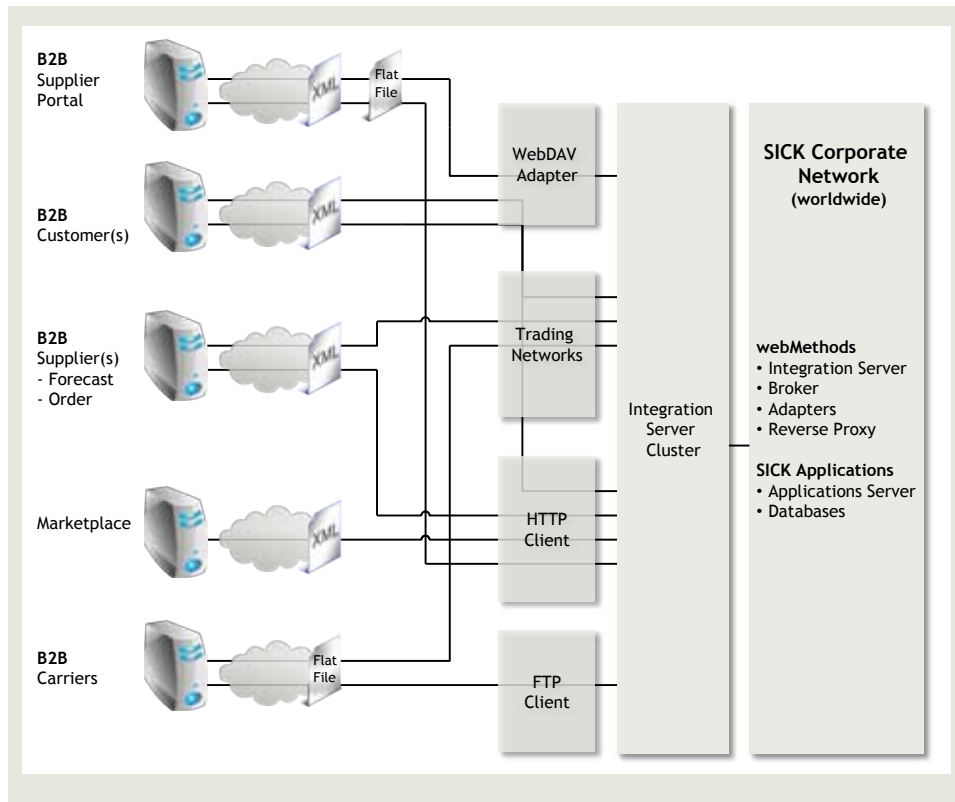
Sick has implemented B2B solution from Software AG with webMethods Trading Networks. The gateway supports various EDI and XML formats as well as flat files for B2B communication between business partners. In particular, Rost emphasizes the opportunity for employees from sales and procurement to create their own partner profiles including individual authorization concepts for customers, suppliers and shipping companies.



Reliable basis for business process management

The topic of “business process management” will also receive greater attention in the future with the help of webMethods. First the existing sales order process was modeled and implemented

using webMethods BPMS. Rost expects the use of webMethods BPMS and functions for visualizing business processes to lead to greater inclusion of the individual departments in business process design, more flexibility and improved monitoring of running processes, among other things.



webMethods supports Sick AG with its diverse external communication relationships.

KEY COMPONENTS

webMethods Integration Server is an ESB, offering diverse functionality within a Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) for the integration of heterogeneous systems.

webMethods Trading Networks is a B2B gateway for EDI-based document exchange. The ESB it was built upon manages and orchestrates the communication.

webMethods Broker ensures stable, high-performance messaging.

webMethods Adapters enable rapid integration of different standard applications and database systems.

webMethods BPMS supports all BPM functions and user groups—from analysis and modeling to implementation and monitoring of new or improved business processes. Solutions implemented with the BPM platform are based on an SOA model.

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ABOUT SOFTWARE AG

Software AG is the global leader in Business Process Excellence. Our 40 years of innovation include the invention of the first high-performance transactional database, Adabas; the first business process analysis platform, ARIS; and the first B2B server and SOA-based integration platform, webMethods.

We offer our customers end-to-end Business Process Management (BPM) solutions delivering low Total-Cost-of-Ownership and high ease of use. Our industry-leading brands, ARIS, webMethods, Adabas, Natural, CentraSite, Terracotta and IDS Scheer Consulting, represent a unique portfolio encompassing: process strategy, design, integration and control; SOA-based integration and data management; process-driven SAP implementation; and strategic process consulting and services.

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