

A TIME-TESTED SYSTEM IS MODERNIZED FOR MAXIMUM BUSINESS FLEXIBILITY AND USER ACCEPTANCE

Challenge

For payroll accounting and personnel management, the companies of Vienna's Wiener Stadtwerke (WStW) Holding AG public utilities holding company use a personnel information system called PI, which was introduced in the early 1990s. In 2005, company management contemplated whether the solution should be replaced with a more modern one. If they chose to replace PI, it must be done without losing the system's unique features such as application functionality and security.

Solution

WStW had its wholly-owned subsidiary, WienIT, test various alternatives to the current PI application; in the end, the company chose to modernize the existing solution rather than replace it. Software AG was selected for the ensuing PI2WEB project to make PI functionality available to users via the intranet and standard Web browsers.

Benefits

- 95 percent of Web interfaces were generated automatically with templates
- The system was Web-enabled in just three person-months
- Met end-user demand for a more modern interface
- WienIT retained the application flexibility to quickly make changes requested by end-users or stemming from new legal regulations



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“ApplinX opened up a very economical option for us – to continue to take advantage of our personnel information system’s time-tested and valued functionalities while simultaneously fulfilling many end users’ calls for ease of use. Many of them only use the system occasionally and are more familiar with Windows and browsers. The successful conclusion of the PI2WEB project has ensured greater acceptance among these users.”

Rudolf Mühlberger | Personnel Systems Manager | WienIT

Opening Major IT functionality to the Web

In addition to being a hallmark of prudent management planning, it makes financial sense to test new IT systems on a regular basis. If end users are dissatisfied with a solution, something must be done about it. “At our company, this was the case for our existing personnel information system, PI, in early 2005,” reports Rudolf Mühlberger, Personnel Systems Manager at WienIT.

The company runs this solution for the entire group at one of its two dataprocessing centers on behalf of parent company Wiener Stadtwerke (WStW) Holding AG. The specially developed mainframe solution, based on Visual Age and DB2, was introduced in the early 1990s. Today more than 1,250 end users administer information on a total of 14,000 active and 12,000 retired employees in 425 offices with PI.

In deciding whether to continue with the PI system or replace it with a standard solution, WienIT had to take the system’s technical features into account. PI’s application functionality, security, and performance were valued by all, making it imperative to retain them. The solution involves 130 complex application processes with logic and database access along with

239 screen interactions where users can choose from about 1,800 input/output maps. The users who accessed PI on a regular basis were accustomed to the symbol-oriented green screens, but the less frequent users preferred standard PC user interfaces.

At the end of the day, it all boiled down to replacing PI with a standard software package or modernizing it with end users in mind. It would have been no surprise if a standard package had been chosen, especially one from SAP: WienIT is a universal IT provider – focused on the energy

sector and communal electricity supply – and an SAP Competence Center with particular SAP expertise. Mühlberger explains why the decision turned out differently: “We are very focused on end users’ needs. For example, we began further developing and modifying the PI system well in advance of new legislation so that we could provide any functional changes in time. It would not be possible to do this with a standard solution.” That and the cost of customizing a standard solution to the specific needs of WienIT’s customers tipped the scales toward making PI available on the intranet via browsers.

Quick and cost-effective Web enabling

Software AG was able to score points with webMethods ApplinX early in the decision-making process for several reasons. In addition to company-specific factors, such as a sufficient on-site workforce and German-language support, webMethods ApplinX’s technological openness was persuasive. webMethods ApplinX not only allows host applications to be operated via Web browser without interference with the central application logic, but it also opens – in the same non-invasive manner – current systems for access via Web services, for example from individual Java applications.

The final decision for webMethods ApplinX was made after a successful pilot project. “For the pilot project, we chose two specific processes so that we would be able to gather feedback from a wide number of users,” says Mühlberger. Following the successful pilot, the full implementation was then made available on the intranet in only three person months. In addition to the Web version, experienced users can still use their preferred 3270 interfaces.

Over the course of the pilot project, the concept of instant templates proved to be rather helpful. Style sheet technology allowed the relevant Web

interfaces to be mostly generated automatically, and via a 1:1 implementation, additional GUI functionality can be installed. “95 % of all Web transformation templates provided by ApplinX involve no manual coding,” stresses Mühlberger. “As a result, ApplinX has provided us with a very economical solution that allowed us to further develop and use the perfected PI functionality in combination with optimized handling and increased customer acceptance.”

KEY COMPONENTS

webMethods ApplinX

webMethods ApplinX was used to make PI functionality available to users via the intranet and standard Web browsers.

Software AG Professional Services

Professional Services was engaged to assist with the webMethods ApplinX implementation.

ABOUT SOFTWARE AG

Software AG is the world’s largest independent provider of Business Infrastructure Software. Our 4,000 global customers achieve measurable business results by modernizing and automating their IT systems and rapidly building new systems and processes to meet growing business demands.

Our industry-leading product portfolio includes best-in-class solutions for managing data, enabling service-oriented architecture, and improving business processes. By combining proven technology with industry expertise and best practices, our customers improve and differentiate their businesses – faster.

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