

## LEARNING CURVE BRANDS GROWS RAPIDLY INTO MARKET LEADER WITH ADABAS AND NATURAL

### Challenge

Imagine integrating eight different companies in less than eight years! That's exactly the challenge that the IT team faced at Learning Curve Brands. The team needed to convert data quickly from acquired systems into its core Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) applications. Speed was critical to seamlessly serve new customers and distribution channels and to prove the value of the acquisitions to shareholders.

### Solution

Adabas and Natural have helped Learning Curve Brands integrate new systems quickly, evolve easily to meet new requirements and compete effectively at a low cost. Throughout the company's fast expansion, its ERP system built with Adabas and Natural delivered the highest availability. Customers experienced virtually no disruption in service, even when transactions tripled to 34.3 million in three years.

### Benefits

- Eight ERP systems integrated in as quickly as seven weeks
- 99.99% uptime achieved, thanks to high-performing Adabas and Natural
- Up to 200,000 transactions delivered a day with sub-second response times
- IT expenses able to stay below the industry average
- Estimated 3-to-1 productivity gain experienced using Natural
- Almost no increase in IT staff required to support this fast-growing business



Learning Curve Brands, Inc. sells toys, collectibles and infant and toddler products under these brands: The First Years® by Learning Curve and classic licensed properties, such as Thomas & Friends, Bob the Builder, Winnie the Pooh, John Deere, Nickelodeon and Sesame Street. The company sells products at more than 25,000 retail outlets across North America.

Get there faster.™

**“We chose Adabas and Natural because they were built for high performance. Over time, we’ve proven to need a highly reliable, high-performing and adaptable solution to handle our expanding business, and that’s what we’ve found with Software AG.”**

Jim Singsank | VP Information Technology | Learning Curve Brands

## Enabling fast business growth

Learning Curve Brands sells toys that help babies and toddlers grow smarter and stronger. With Adabas and Natural, the company has found a reliable IT infrastructure that helps it do the same! The toy distributor has less than 1,000 employees, yet, in the past decade, Learning Curve Brands has been able to grow into a formidable player in a global multi-billion-dollar industry – competing with Hasbro and Mattel and serving well-known retailers, such as Target, Wal-Mart and Toys “R” Us/Babies “R” Us.

Since 1999, Learning Curve Brands has customized its core ERP system using Adabas and Natural, and periods of rapid growth have been managed with success, according to Jim Singsank, Vice President of Information Technology.

For example, since 2002, the IT team has integrated eight companies (five of them acquisitions) into the core ERP system in as little as seven weeks. Back-end business-critical systems, including order processing, purchasing and accounts payable, needed to be integrated quickly so the combined companies could operate as a single entity.

“Converting data from acquired ERP systems quickly is a key measure of an acquisition’s success,” Singsank said. “We were able to convert data from eight ERP systems, PC-based and AS/400-based, including QuickBooks, MAPICS and Great Plains Dynamics, in timeframes ranging from just seven to 16 weeks.”

Migrations went smoothly with the help of Software AG products. Natural was used to “massage” and integrate data from the other ERP systems to put into appropriate Adabas files on orders, invoices, inventory, and customers.

## Growing up and meeting tougher demands

Learning Curve Brands chose Adabas because of its ability to handle high data volumes. “We process as many as 500,000 orders a year with as many as 2 million line items or more,” Singsank said.

Over time, retail outlets have grown to expect more from Learning Curve Brands. Using Adabas and Natural, the company has met increasingly sophisticated customer requirements with relative ease. “Adabas and Natural have allowed us to keep our IT infrastructure simple and flexible so we can handle the changing day-to-day requirements of our customers as well as business process changes,” Singsank said.

For example, when a leading retailer began using Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags to track shipments, Learning Curve Brands easily adapted back-end systems and EDI applications to track tag numbers and change shipping labels. “We simply added a field to our Adabas files,” he said.

“We can add data fields within minutes. We move them from test to production; it’s not a big deal. We have worked with a lot of companies in third party warehouses where they had to add a new data field and they couldn’t do it.”

Even as customers, offerings and distribution channels grow, Adabas is up to the challenge. During the busiest seasons, Learning Curve Brands has handled up to 200,000 very robust transactions a day with sub-second response times – all with an uptime of 99.99%.

## Doing more with the same resources

Adabas and Natural also are helping Learning Curve Brands compete effectively at a low cost, keeping its IT budget under the industry average.

“Software AG technology has enabled us to handle growing requirements without increasing the ratio of our IT budget to net sales,” Singsank said. “The IT team has been able to accomplish more with essentially the same number of human resources to effectively support our growing business and to compete successfully in the dynamic toy market, thanks to an IT infrastructure built on Adabas and Natural.”

The company has achieved a much larger return on investment in Adabas and Natural than expected, according to Singsank, who also estimates a 3-to-1 productivity gain when using Natural over other development languages.

“Natural is easy to learn and use and has enabled fast data conversions of our acquired ERP systems,” he said. “When new staff comes onboard, they may start out being well-versed in COBOL or RPG. But in a matter of a few months, they become highly proficient in Natural. This has enabled our IT team to meet deadlines by converting data and EDI transactions quickly from ERP systems of acquired companies.”

## KEY COMPONENTS

### **Adabas and Natural**

Are the company’s core systems.

### **Adabas Cluster Services**

Enables workloads to be distributed between LPARS avoiding job conflicts to maintain optimal system performance.

### **Natural Security**

Allows application-level security.

### **Entire Network**

Is used to make direct calls to Adabas from Web applications.

### **Adabas SQL Gateway**

Enables Learning Curve Brands to accommodate calls from sources other than Natural programs to access Adabas data.

#### **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.

Software AG – Get There Faster

© 2008 Software AG. All rights reserved. Software AG and all Software AG products are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Software AG. Other product and company names mentioned herein may be the trademarks of their respective owners.