BLANCO GROUP
RAPID, SECURE, ROLE-BASED ACCESS TO BUSINESS-CRITICAL DATA

"With SAP NetWeaver Enterprise Search, employees are no longer tied up looking for information manually. Instead, they can perform fast, integrated searches for structured and unstructured data."

Ralf Kafka, Manager, SAP Basis Technology, Blanco Group

QUICK FACTS

Company
- Name: Blanco Group
- Location: Oberderdingen, Germany
- Industries: Consumer products, mill products, industrial machinery and components – fabricated metal products
- Products and services: Design attractive, efficient solutions for workplaces in domestic and commercial kitchens, medical care systems, and industrial components
- Revenue: €376 million
- Employees: 1,900
- Web site: www.blanco.de
- Implementation partner: SAP® Consulting

Challenges and Opportunities
- Eliminate time-consuming manual searches
- Pinpoint business-critical data more rapidly across the enterprise
- Improve ability to locate information residing in SAP business software, as well as unstructured data in Microsoft Office documents and other unstructured documents like PDF files
- Ensure searches deliver high-quality results relevant to the corresponding user's role and access rights

Objectives
Implement a state-of-the-art solution that accelerates and enhances the quality of company-wide searches

SAP Solutions and Services
SAP NetWeaver® Enterprise Search application

Implementation Highlights
- Implemented software at Oberderdingen site in just 6 months
- Reevaluated internal user management and access rights as a result of discoveries made during the testing phase

Why SAP
- Tight integration with the company's extensive SAP software environment
- Ability to quickly search for structured and unstructured data

Benefits
- Single, secure interface for performing enterprise-wide searches
- Faster searches, significantly increasing employee productivity
- High-quality results based on user roles and authorizations
- Consolidation of all hits in a single list
- Display of links to related actions and transactions alongside results

Existing Environment
A range of SAP business software, including the SAP ERP and SAP Customer Relationship Management applications

Third-Party Integration
- Database: SAP MaxDB™
- Hardware: HP
- Operating system: SUSE Linux

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Unearthing information required to complete day-to-day tasks can take time – especially for a company like Blanco Group, which relies on an extensive range of SAP® software solutions including the SAP ERP and SAP Customer Relationship Management (SAP CRM) applications. To add to this challenge, the Germany-based manufacturer of kitchen and catering systems has sites in various countries worldwide. To ensure fast, role-based access to structured and unstructured data across the company, Blanco chose to implement the SAP NetWeaver® Enterprise Search application – eliminating the need for time-consuming manual searches and increasing user productivity.

In addition to a wide range of innovative kitchen and catering solutions, Blanco Group also provides medical care systems and industrial components. Founded in 1925, the company is headquartered in Oberderdingen and has production facilities in Germany, Canada, and the Czech Republic. Blanco Group owns subsidiaries across the globe and makes 70% of its sales abroad – a figure that underlines the company's international success. The company, which employs 1,900 people, posted revenues of €376 million in 2007.

The Need for Speed

With such a large IT environment spanning multiple sites, finding the right information quickly was often a real headache for Blanco staff. So, when Blanco heard about an SAP application that would significantly simplify and accelerate the process, the company jumped at the chance to find out more.

Werner Gassner, deputy IT manager at Blanco Group, explains, "We realized that the time and effort we were spending on structuring, saving, and searching for data could be better invested. We wanted to implement an efficient solution that would help us find information rapidly – no matter where it is located."

Blanco Group needed an IT solution with a centralized search engine that would help pinpoint data across the enterprise – whether in production, sales, or marketing. It wanted to ensure that users could locate unstructured information residing in HTML files and Microsoft documents as well as business objects in SAP applications. "We could already run searches in SAP software with relative ease, but we were unable to search for documents outside the SAP solution landscape," says Gassner. Ralf Kafka, manager of SAP basis technology at Blanco Group, highlights the

associated problems: "An employee would often save a document but not tell anyone else where it was saved, so users would often end up wasting valuable time on manual searches."

An Easy Choice

SAP introduced Blanco to SAP NetWeaver Enterprise Search. This state-of-the-art application provides a single point of access to information and documents residing in both SAP and non-SAP applications throughout the organization. As well as being highly intuitive, it helps ensure rapid responses to queries and delivers high-quality results. Blanco did not need much convincing. "We did not even look at other options," Gassner explains. "Given the size of our SAP landscape and our general commitment to implementing SAP software, SAP NetWeaver Enterprise Search was the right solution for us."

The application also offered security – which was high on Blanco's list of priorities. "A major plus of SAP NetWeaver Enterprise Search is that it automatically recognizes preestablished user roles and authorizations in the SAP business software," says Kafka. Bastian Kromer, Web application developer at Blanco Group, elaborates, "Enterprise searches demand a much higher level of security than, say, Internet searches. All information released on the Web is available to the public. But to be of any use, our searches must deliver results that take into account users' specific access rights and roles."

A Useful Learning Experience

Having determined that SAP NetWeaver Enterprise Search met its specific requirements, Blanco set about introducing the application at its site in Oberderdingen. The implementation took just six months. During the project, Blanco worked closely with SAP to integrate SAP NetWeaver Enterprise Search into its IT environment. "We realized early on that we needed additional expertise – and collaboration was excellent in this area," says Gassner.

Of course, the team encountered the odd bump or two along the way, but Blanco managed to turn these issues into opportunities. Kafka explains, "When it came to testing the solution, some users found documents that they shouldn't have had access to. This forced us to take a critical look at internal user management and access rights in some departments and allowed us to

eliminate errors during the actual implementation. In this respect, the project was a useful learning experience. It involved a great deal of organization – because enterprise workers have much higher expectations than Web users; when they run a search, they usually have a certain file or document in mind."

Major Benefits

When the solution first went live, 20 employees in various departments such as logistics, financial controlling, and sales began using the software on

a test basis. While the rollout is not yet complete, Blanco is already anticipating major benefits – including significant increases in productivity. "With SAP NetWeaver Enterprise Search, employees are no longer tied up looking for information manually. Instead, they can perform fast, integrated searches for structured and unstructured data," says Kafka. "What's more, results are consolidated in a single list."

SAP NetWeaver Enterprise Search provides Blanco with a common, secure interface for locating information in SAP ERP and SAP CRM, as well as unstructured data stored in sources

such as file shares and Web servers. It offers the speed and flexibility of an Internet search engine – but with greater security and higher-quality results. For example, users can restrict and refine queries by entering keywords.

But that's not all. The solution also helps employees translate results into immediate action, due to convenient links to related tasks and transactions displayed alongside the results lists. Says Kromer, "End users can now move directly from a search result to the corresponding business object in

SAP ERP or SAP CRM by simply clicking on a link – saving even more time." That means, for example, that employees can query a customer name and then jump to the back-end system and create, change, or delete sales orders.

Enterprise-Wide Integration

The test users at Blanco Group's Oberderdingen site have fully welcomed SAP NetWeaver Enterprise Search. "They use the application on a regular basis," says Kromer. "We plan to roll out the software to additional sites by late 2009 – bringing another 350 to 400 users online."

In the meantime, Blanco is introducing the SAP NetWeaver Portal and SAP NetWeaver Identity Management components across the enterprise. These initiatives are also scheduled for a company-wide rollout next year. "We are particularly interested in the benefits of dovetailing SAP NetWeaver Enterprise Search with SAP NetWeaver Portal," says Kromer. "The integration will provide unified, real-time access to business-critical data – soon, hopefully, also including information residing in e-mails – and help ensure broad acceptance of SAP NetWeaver Enterprise Search across the company."

With upgrades to the latest versions of SAP CRM and the SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse component up ahead, it looks like Blanco is set for many more projects over the coming years. Gassner concludes, "We are an international player with sites all over the world – and SAP software offers the high levels of integration we need to ensure successful collaboration company-wide."

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