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Karl E. Brinkmann GmbH (KEB), Barntrup

Improving global information exchange –
breaking down all the boundaries with
SAP and Unicode.

»To support our international growth and establish uniform standards group-wide, only an ERP solution from SAP came into question, for strategic reasons. With the Unicode connection, we will be able to display characters correctly in the SAP system for a host of languages in all culture areas in the future, providing us with competitive advantages in a globalised economy.«

Ralf Lutter, Managing Director of KEB GmbH

Those who market control technology have to set their own course.

Control is our business – and our recipe for success!

Karl E. Brinkmann GmbH (KEB) is implementing a complete and integrated SAP system with Unicode on the basis of the SAP-based industry solution it.hightronics from itelligence AG. The solution is to standardise and improve global information flows at KEB to support the mid-market company's future growth strategy. KEB is pursuing a medium and long-term growth strategy to continue expanding its international presence.

The challenge of globalisation

"One of the key challenges for our company is the increasing globalisation of the economy and thus of our customers as well," explains KEB director Ralf Lutter. "To deal with this, we need standard, transparent information and evalua-

tions across all locations, from all enterprise areas, such as development, production, sales or accounting," says Ralf Lutter, describing the requirements.

The former heterogeneous IT landscape only offered limited possibilities here. It comprised a self-developed logistics solution, programmed on the basis of Cobol, as well as software solutions for financial accounting, time recording, wage processing, asset accounting and controlling – all from different providers.

One IT solution for all business processes

The individual systems were connected to each other via numerous interfaces that required a great deal of effort to operate, maintain and modify. Each time an application was updated, the interfaces to the other systems had to be adapted.

The company lacked a uniform platform to merge and evaluate the business results of the individual KEB subsidiaries. KEB did not have group-wide uniform IT standards either. The individual companies had to adapt the self-developed logistics software to suit country-specific requirements, which made managing the data and information centrally considerably more difficult.

To unite all the business processes in one IT solution in the future, the midmarket company decided to implement integrated and sustainable business software. KEB sounded out the market and made its choice of software. A key aspect: The future software had to be Unicode-enabled to ensure a smooth exchange of information between all group companies. This was particularly relevant for integrating the branches in Asia, Russia and the Czech Republic.

Karl E. Brinkmann GmbH (KEB), Barntrup

Barntrup's Karl E. Brinkmann GmbH (KEB) is an international manufacturer of electronic drive technologies for machine systems and plant engineering. Its success story began in 1972 with the idea of producing and distributing electromagnetic clutches and brakes, as well as spring brakes. From its six original employees, KEB has evolved into a midmarket company that is active worldwide, producing ultramodern solutions for industrial drive technology. The company manufactures electromagnetic clutches and brakes and gear motors, as well as electronic controllers or frequency inverters, used to control and regulate three-phase motors. The KEB company group currently consists of 10 companies and offices in 17 countries, including Europe, the United States and Asia (China, Japan and South Korea). With 1,000 employees worldwide, KEB recorded group sales of around EUR 130 million in 2005. The export ratio of the overall sales is currently 55 percent and rising.



SAP with Unicode – software for every language

KEB decided to implement SAP R/3 Enterprise with Unicode “because SAP is a safe investment and is available worldwide in nearly every language,” as Ralf Lutter puts it. KEB accepted the tender from full-service provider itelligence AG as an implementation partner for the project. “On the one hand, itelligence is experienced in implementing SAP software internationally and, on the other hand, the itelligence consultants speak the language of the midmarket, thanks to the local proximity, and are familiar with our requirements on site,” says Lutter, explaining the company’s choice. Another benefit was that it.hightronics of itelligence is a preconfigured industry solution that is integrated into the SAP system, including international reference installations.

Based on it.hightronics, the itelligence consultants firstly implemented a company template in a subarea of KEB’s German group head office and defined the group standards. While still in

the template phase, the SAP system was implemented at the KEB branch in Shanghai and then enhanced with the country-specific requirements. Modules for Financial Accounting (FI), Controlling (CO), Sales and Distribution (SD), Materials Management (MM) and components from Production Planning and Control (PP) were implemented in China.





Name:
Karl E. Brinkmann GmbH
(KEB)

Industry:
Mechanical engineering

Company size:
1,000 employees

Sales:
EUR 130 million in 2005

Head office:
Barntrup, Germany

Branches:
in 17 countries

Smooth implementation in China

Implementing the SAP software at the Chinese branch did "not call for any major preparations," according to Bernhard Peuser. Although there are differences in language, culture and mentality in China and Germany, KEB has been running its representation in China for a long time now. This enjoys intensive support from Germany and a regular exchange of employees.

As part of the SAP implementation, consultants from SAP China trained the KEB employees in Shanghai to work with the new SAP system in their own language. The country-specific settings for the software were made in agreement with itelligence and the KEB head office in Barntrup, as well as in close collaboration with the processing staff responsible in China. The deadlines required for settings, workshops and training courses were coordinated by a Chinese subproject leader who made regular e-mail reports on the individual project progress to the German head office. The smooth go-live in China was supervised on site by an IT employee from the German KEB, with support from SAP China in English. In September 2005, the KEB employees in Shanghai began working with the new software, which has been supported by KEB's IT department in Barntrup since the go-live.

"We chose the branch in China because it's a manageable subproject," says IT project leader Bernhard Peuser, describing the process. At the same time, the SAP implementation in Shanghai was to be exemplary for the further international roll out of SAP software with the Unicode standard. "We will benefit from our positive experiences in China in the international follow-on projects," says IT project leader Peuser, convinced of this. He also highlights the excellent collaboration with the itelligence consultants

"because they unite midmarket and industry knowledge with a cross-module view of the processes and international experience." At present, some 25 users at KEB are working with SAP, but when all the companies are connected in the final expansion stage, this number will rise to a total of 400.

Unicode – bridging worlds

The Unicode technology has proven to be particularly beneficial for KEB since it enables the SAP software to be used directly in a host of languages and countries without any complex adjustments. If SAP users in Barntrup log on in Chinese, for example, the system displays all Chinese characters correctly, even though the operating system is German.

Installing the group standard in Shanghai has also ensured more transparency in cross-company processes. Even release changes will be easier and faster to complete in the future since KEB controls, supports and maintains the SAP system centrally in Barntrup. "The SAP software is the foundation that will enable us to control and drive our expansion strategy even more specifically in the future," concludes Ralf Lutter.

Facts & Figures

Solution: SAP R/3 Enterprise (mySAP ERP 2005 since July 2006) with the it.hightronics industry solution

Server: IBM System i5, server modell 570
Operating system: OS/400