

THE IT-ARCHITECTURE PROFESSIONALS

Interactive Objects Builds IBAS Budgeting System for Danzas with ArcStyler

Industry

Logistics

Application

- **Web-based budgeting application for creating, managing and controlling all IT-related products, projects and services of all Danzas IT departments worldwide**
- **Outsourced project completely implemented by Interactive Objects as a one-stop shopping, full solution provider**

Benefits

- **New application allows for more efficient controlling of all IT budgets due to new views, queries and evaluation functions, thus enabling considerable savings**
- **Extremely fast development**
- **Optimization of customer-vendor interface in outsourced projects**
- **Clearly predictable results and elimination of risk factors along the entire project path**
- **Fast return on investment due to high degree of automation provided by ArcStyler**
- **Full exploitation of all MDA benefits in a given project without the necessity to make any changes to the architecture of the corporate IT landscape or the company's IT-architectural approach**

Danzas Group

With a strong presence in 150 countries on all continents, the Danzas Group is the world's leading provider of IT-supported logistics solutions. Innovative customized logistics solutions, worldwide air and ocean freight, global project forwarding, European over-land transport, e-business and 4th party logistics enable Danzas to offer real one-stop shopping. Based in Basel, Switzerland, Danzas belongs to Deutsche Post World Net. With a staff of more than 45,000, the Danzas Group achieved sales of EUR 9.2 billion in 2001.

Logistics nowadays is a lot more than trucks, trains, ships and airplanes. The ability to meet complex global logistics requirements along complete supply chains with value-added services on the basis of advanced IT technologies gives Danzas the decisive competitive edge. More than 1,000 staff of INTE, the IT department of Danzas, provide the necessary powerful IT services in offices all over the world. Says Stephan Rohrer, Corporate IT Controller at Danzas: "The reliability and stability of our applications is key to the success of our company. So whether we make or buy, superior quality is always paramount - we can't afford surprises."

We were not really looking for Model Driven Architecture. We wanted superior system quality, fast development, a secure outsourcing approach and a quick return on investment. Then we learned that Interactive Objects' approach ensures that MDA and these benefits are synonymous.

Stephan Rohrer,
Corporate IT Controller at Danzas

The Challenge

Danzas needed to replace its existing system for the budget management for all IT departments. The old system used approximately 20 Excel workbooks, each of them with multiple worksheets. To create, manage and control individual project budgets, functions and data had to be entered and copied manually across several files before the workbooks were e-mailed to and returned from the appropriate persons. This procedure was error-prone and resulted in considerable version management effort. In addition, there were no efficient mechanisms for access control, and the implementation of custom queries and reports was nearly impossible.

Headquarters

Interactive Objects Software GmbH
Basler Str. 65 · D-79100 Freiburg
Germany · Phone +49-(0)761-400 73-0

Danzas wanted an efficient Web-based budgeting system, based on J2EE, a BEA application server and a central Oracle database, technologies and products that are used for numerous other applications in the company. The problem was that Danzas needed a high-quality solution fast without having the internal resources available. The company had planned on a project timeline of no more than four months, so they decided to buy, not to make.

The Application

Interactive Objects used its Architectural IDE ArcStyler to develop the INTE Budget Application System (IBAS), a fully Web-based J2EE application. Within an initial requirements assessment phase of four weeks, the functional structure of the application was defined and a concept for the graphical user interface proposed by Interactive Objects.

The system was then implemented in a development period of only three months and deployed on a server in Paris. The central database can be accessed via the Danzas intranet and well-defined access control mechanisms. Danzas' users work with the central IBAS elements of cost centers, cost positions, resource positions and attributions to create, manage and control the budgets for all Danzas IT projects and services around the globe.

The new application optimizes the workflows involved in controlling the Danzas IT budgets. It allows the individual controllers to access all data on the central server via a sophisticated Web GUI. Different views, reports and queries enable the effective visualization of the cost status and developments in all our IT projects. New reporting views can be added at any time. Says Marco Argentieri, Corporate IT Controller at Danzas: "The IBAS application makes our cost structures a lot more transparent. It's the ad hoc availability of well-structured data at any point on the globe that turns IBAS into a major contribution to optimizing our IT investments."

New Level of Efficiency to Outsourcing Projects

The ArcStyler is the result of Interactive Objects' impressive consulting background that clearly distinguishes the company from other tool vendors. The ArcStyler consolidates a total of more than 500 years of consulting experience, making this packaged know-how available to ArcStyler users. In addition, customers benefit from this combination of tools and consulting experience in projects outsourced to Interactive Objects as a one-stop, full-service solution provider.

Model Driven Architecture simply means that the business logic of an application is modeled at a level of abstraction that is independent of implementation-specific technological detail. In subsequent steps, the implementation detail is added by means of automated mapping techniques. This separates the distinctly different life-cycles of the business system design from the implementation technology and makes the application future-safe.

In the initial requirements assessment phase of four weeks, the functional structure of the IBAS application was defined by a consultant from Interactive Objects together with the Danzas controllers. Interactive Objects proposed a technical representation of the domain-specific requirements of Danzas in the form of elements of cost centers, cost positions, resource positions and attributions. Explains Stephan Rohrer: "Interactive Objects immediately understood our needs and quickly came up with a solution. At a very early stage, we could clearly see that their approach and expertise would turn the project into a success."

In the second project phase, Interactive Objects used the ArcStyler to develop a platform-independent UML model and generate the entire infrastructure (EJB components and Web application) from this model. The high degree of automation along this development path ensured superior quality, fast implementation within just three months as well as cost-effectiveness.

The deliverables not only included the running application, but all models that were created along this path. The standard UML models provide an excellent, well-structured documentation of the system. Each layer of the application is documented exactly at the right level. This is far superior to the typical documentation where business logic information is cluttered with documentation concerning technical details at a low code level. These models can be used with any UML tool since this format is completely open, i.e. there is no 'black box' involved. This allows the Danzas domain experts to easily specify new functionality."

The Bottom Line

There is no need to make any changes to the overall IT landscape of a company if Model Driven Architecture is applied in compact, outsourced projects. Even in smaller projects, application development with the ArcStyler ensures rapid implementation of high-ROI software systems. This also applies to outsourced projects in which Interactive Objects' approach optimizes the customer-vendor interfaces and streamlines the workflows. The rapidly growing community of ArcStyler partners using the tool in their own development projects provides convincing evidence of these benefits.

Among other things, this is due to the fact that the Model Driven Architecture approach taken by Interactive Objects and the ArcStyler allow for the dramatic reduction of a number of cost factors that have come to be accepted as the "inherent" costs of IT projects, but that are completely unnecessary. Often, several weeks or months are built into project plans to cater to problems with the "unexpected" or the "time to get to speed".

Interactive Objects' services and tools make the company an excellent outsourcing partner. Their approach to Model Driven Architecture is by no means just a hype or an academic exercise, but plain common sense. The way they practice application development introduces a completely new quality into optimizing outsourced projects.

Marco Argentieri,
Corporate IT Controller at Danzas



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