



SAP add-on for global connectivity infrastructure solutions provider

Optimise supply chain processes with transparency

The expansion of high-performance copper and glass fibre systems is progressing rapidly worldwide. More and more countries invest in high-quality communication networks. For manufacturers of such connectivity solutions, the perfect functioning of the supply chain and its processes is a key factor for success. Transparency is indispensable, especially in cross-plant and cross-site supply chains spanning different production lines. To better meet the high demands of SAP-controlled logistics processes, Reichle & De-Massari AG (R&M), a globally active Swiss developer and provider of high-quality infrastructure solutions for data and communication networks, was searching for a suitable and solution-oriented standard extension. Today, several modules of the GIB Suite from ifm provide R&M with a better overview of the current planning situation and support the company in being able to react quickly in critical situations.

As an independent Swiss family business, R&M has 59 years of experience in the information and communication technology market. R&M contributes that people and organisations can communicate without restrictions and is represented in over 40 countries on all continents with its own market organisations. The decentralised production network comprises 14 own plants worldwide. Over 80 per cent of sales are generated abroad.

R&M solutions are mainly used in the following segments: LAN and building automation, data centres and public networks. Complete infrastructures for data centres, housings for network technology, hardware and software for infrastructure management and own cable and rack production complete the range.

Goal: Transparency about the planning situation and easy rollout for new plants

For these complex application areas, R&M produces thousands of technically sophisticated products that have to meet the highest quality standards. It is obvious that the logistics of so many products and their correct production and delivery place very high demands on supply chain management. "The complexity and degree of difficulty in operating and evaluating the data prompted us to look for a new software solution a few years ago. SAP APO lacked flexibility and transparency and we had problems with the SAP ECC – SAP APO interface," recalls Diana Pilz, Manager Corporate Business Systems (SAP CC Management).



After some research, the choice fell on the modules of the GIB Suite from ifm, whose supply chain software division has years of experience in optimising logistical processes in SAP. The decisive factor was that the SAP-certified GIB Suite could be seamlessly integrated into SAP without interfaces and investment in additional hardware, and also met all requirements set out by R&M: The new solution should provide more transparency and be tailored to the needs of the company. It was also crucial that the solution could be rolled out to new plants and sites quickly and with minimum effort. “In addition to the costs, the transparency and user-friendliness of the software were also decisive,” says Diana Pilz.

Introductory phase and customer-specific adjustments

The project was launched in March 2017 and successfully completed in January 2018. By April 2018, the solution was then rolled out to the national subsidiaries, so that the old system could be decommissioned in May. As expected, the biggest challenge during the implementation was to replace the production planning process in SAP APO by ifm. Here, the decision was made to equip one plant after another with the new solution. This naturally led to slight delays due to limited test data but could be managed through extensive communication and employee involvement.

The implementation was also used to test a key requirement of the new supply chain management solution. To align the software more closely with R&M's daily process operations, various adjustments and expansions were performed. With the GIB Planning module, a solution was developed to map the specific production planning approach (including capacity planning with two-tier work centres structures). The GIB Forecast module since then fulfils the function of collecting and correctly aggregating the transaction data. The software is now used by 170 members of staff worldwide at sites in Switzerland, Poland, Bulgaria, Germany, the USA and the United Arab Emirates.

Thanks to the training courses and the closely supervised introductory phase, the response from users is sustainably positive, to which user-friendliness also contributes. R&M plans to continue working with the GIB Suite after the SAP solution is converted to S/4HANA in 2024.

Better able to act based on available data

“Since our daily process flows are carried out on an international scale, the processes have to be optimally coordinated. The introduction of ifm's supply chain software has given us an improved overview of the current planning situation in



the different production sites. Since then, we can react faster in critical phases and achieve better planning results," says Diana Pilz.

The fast introduction of the GIB Suite at new sites was also a requirement that could be met. In recent years, the software has been integrated into all new implementations at R&M's production plants as part of the SAP implementation. A positive side effect: the SAP support effort could be reduced by using the new add-on.

With the SAP-certified GIB Suite, R&M has optimised its logistical processes and thus increased its delivery readiness. This was particularly relevant during the very challenging years of the COVID-19 pandemic. The transparency offered by the solution facilitates centralized, cross-plant control of individual areas, which optimises efficiency. Critical decisions can be made more quickly based on the available data while simultaneously reducing costs.