

LANSA Case Study

SAKRET-GmbH handles any business request with LANSA

SAKRET, one of the largest producers of ready-mix concrete and mortar products in the world, has its European headquarters in Wiesbaden, Germany. SAKRET-GmbH, a long-time LANSA user, built its core manufacturing system with LANSA, as well as a variety of extensions including Computer Telephony Integration for customer service and a Wireless scanning solution in factories and warehouses.

Dr. R. Stubenrauch, IT Manager at SAKRET-GmbH, says, "I can handle any business request with LANSA. LANSA has been a reliable and consistent factor in the handling of all our business processes. It is easy to use and learn and its platform independence is also important for us. Even though we deploy mostly to the iSeries now, we develop and test in Windows. Development and maintenance are faster and more efficient in LANSA than in RPG, helping to deliver results faster."



The Challenge of Ready-mix

SAKRET was introduced to LANSA in 1996. At the time, SAKRET was looking for a flexible and scalable ERP solution to manage production processes, suppliers and customers. Materials from listed suppliers all over Europe are delivered to SAKRET's 60 production plants as needed. Production is usually based on customer orders that contain requests for specific prescriptions, a requirement not often covered in standard ERP solutions.

TROBAS, a solution specifically for the dry mix mortar and building materials industry, was developed together with a local software company, now named SOFT-M Communications.

Dr Stubenrauch, at the time a member of the software house development team, selected LANSA and its modeling tool RUOM for the project. "LANSA's platform independence was important, as we wanted to target iSeries, UNIX and Windows users in the building materials industry. LANSA's short learning curve was important as well."

"For a large projects like TROBAS, you need a robust development environment. I liked LANSA's Repository-based architecture and the concept of IO modules for all data access, as it creates high quality and easy to maintain applications. We decided on project standards and defined all objects, attributes, files, fields, relationships and business rules in the LANSA Repository. When we felt confident with the business model we had built, we generated the functions using LANSA's templates."



"Moving data entry to the warehouse floor eliminated almost all errors."

Further development and maintenance of TROBAS has continued at SAKRET since the late nineties. The solution now contains modules and extensions for purchasing, supply chain management, production planning, inventory management, silo logistics, tour planning optimization, a self service touch screen application for truck drivers to weigh their load, sales, invoicing, EDI interfaces and KPI statistics.

"The application works fast and is fail safe. We have been using LANSA since 1998 and never experienced any problems with LANSA," says Stubenrauch.

Wireless Warehousing

Truck drivers deliver the finished product in bulk to SAKRET's silos and use a self-service touch screen program to enter details about their load before they drive their truck on the weighing platform. The data is sent over data queues to a LANSA program to process and print a delivery note on the local printer for the driver.

Staff in the dispatch zones of SAKRET's three German manufacturing plants are equipped with handheld radio data transmission terminals (Intermec RT1800), that can scan barcodes and have a keypad. The handhelds are constantly on-line to SAKRET's central iSeries via Universal Access Points (UAPs) installed throughout the dispatch zones that each has its own TCP/IP connection to the iSeries in Nordhausen. The UAPs broadcast the information to and from the Wireless handheld devices.

When the pallets with goods leave the production area, barcode stickers printed by LANSA programs on the factories' remote printers are attached. SAKRET uses the EAN/UCC-13 barcode to identify the individual product bags and the EAN/UCC-128 barcode to verify the quantity of goods on a pallet.

The barcodes are scanned when picking the goods, loading the goods for distribution and when stocktaking. These three warehouse tasks are LANSA functions that are offered as menu options on the Wireless devices.

Stubenrauch says, "Before we implemented the Wireless scanning solution, stock movements were recorded on

paper and keyed in by data entry staff a day later. Papers could get lost, handwriting could be hard to read and because of the delayed data entry, the inventory was always somewhat out of date."

"We produce over 300,000 tonnes of ready-mix a year in Germany. With that volume, even a low error percentage still means a lot of mistakes. Now we have almost zero errors."

"We have eliminated almost all errors by moving data entry to the warehouse floor and scanning the goods. The barcode tags provide better tracing of the pallets and better shipping accuracy. Our inventory system is now real-time and up-to-date."

"The barcode scanning functions for inventory stocktaking were developed by a junior programmer with only three months experience, a clear testimony to LANSA's short learning curve," says Stubenrauch.

Integrated Computer Telephony

SAKRET's largest customers send their orders via EDI, but the call center still receives over 700 calls per day from smaller customers wanting to place or change orders and calls from customers with technical or logistic inquiries.

To handle this phone traffic, SAKRET uses IBM's TelephoneService/400 (TS/400), a Computer-Telephony Integrated application. SAKRET's Octopus phone system passes the phone number of incoming calls to an OS/2 server, then via data queues to the iSeries where it is captured by TS/400, which has APIs to call external functions.

A LANSA function looks up the customer details and determines the preferred customer service representative. LANSA then opens this representative's display and transfers the call.

If the preferred representative isn't available, the display of a co-worker is opened. The information displayed on the representative's screen includes customer contact details,



Staff in the dispatch zones of SAKRET's three German manufacturing plants are equipped with handheld radio data transmission terminals that scan barcodes and are constantly online.

Company and System Information

- SAKRET, a franchise operation with over 60 licensed production plants worldwide, is one of the largest producers of ready-mix concrete and mortar products in the world. SAKRET's European head office is in Wiesbaden, Germany. SAKRET Trockenbaustoffe Europa GmbH & Co. KG has 26 production plants in Europe. SAKRET-GmbH has three production plants in Germany.
- SAKRET-GmbH produces around 300,000 tonnes of ready-mix a year and net revenue for 2003 was 40 million Euros. SAKRET's main customers are building and construction companies, building material wholesalers and Do-It-Yourself retailers.
- SAKRET-GmbH uses an iSeries model 820 for production systems and a Windows environment for development. For more information visit: www.sakret.de

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orders and electronic images of recent delivery notes and invoices.

SAKRET-GmbH has a Lotus Notes workflow interface over its Sales Force Quotation/Offer system and a LANSA program exchanges static data and quotation information with Lotus Notes data connector via a VPN.

"LANSA functions take care of the call distribution, display of information, order tracing and capturing the notes of the conversation," explains Stubenrauch.

"Our representatives have all the information at their fingertips, right away when they answer a call. They can answer customer queries faster and more accurately, keeping the phone call short and efficient."

"Cost savings were not the objective. The solution helps us to provide better and faster customer service," says Stubenrauch.

eCollaboration the Next Step

"eCollaboration over the Web is the next step in providing supply chain efficiency and we see a lot of opportunity for using LANSA Integrator in this area," concludes Stubenrauch.

"EDIFACT and other B2B formats are becoming cost effective and affordable even for our smaller business partners."

"In the short term we plan to redesign the user interface programs with Visual LANSA, as it simplifies the operations for our users and provides them with better productivity. We have only just started this redesign. I am very enthusiastic about the new possibilities and the object-oriented design and programming, particularly about the reusable components and easy integration with ActiveX."

"LANSA helps us to rapidly deliver quality applications," says Stubenrauch. "The LANSA Repository and I/O modules consistently apply the business rules and safeguard referential integrity. Maintenance is easier as well, because the business rules are centrally defined, and not in the individual programs. And LANSA is easy to integrate with other systems, both at data and program level."

"LANSA has been a reliable and consistent factor in the handling of all our business processes. New system extensions as well as maintenance of the existing programs are realized in relatively short development times. LANSA is an efficient development platform."

"LANSA lets us extend and maintain a large system with a small IT team of only two people. Our close relationship with LANSA lets us take advantage of technological advances, which benefit SAKRET and our customers," says Stubenrauch.

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