



"In less than one month all management members of CWA were convinced that SAP R/3 would be the best solution for their company", explains Dominique Born, Finance & Accounting Manager of Cable and Wire Assemblies. This statement was based on what they saw during the standard demo's of SAP. Compared with the other solutions, SAP had a better mapping and integration level with the CWA requirements. The scope of the project was the complete integration of the production, the logistic and the financial modules. R/3 was based on a real client/server architecture and thus a better technical environment and last but not least, SAP, with its proven support-organisation, was the only supplier with Belgian reference customers.

Integration, the key to concentration on core skills

Dominique Born is very clear at that point. "We learned from the past - the idea that your company might have a continuity problem because of its data-system is unbearable, unacceptable. A company should focus on its core business, focus on available products. Your data-system should be a tool that helps you to control and to decide on how your core business will go on. Only an integrated system can deliver up-to-date and useful information in that sense. You can't afford to take the risk that this tool/solution can't be supported any longer so that it damages your company."

Strategic choices

Real Software, the preferred implementation partner, assisted CWA during the complete package-selection-period and gave advice for what concerned hard- and software issues. CWA opted for the SAP R/3 system, an IBM RS6000 with AIX and an Oracle database. "Real Software engaged itself for a fixed-price-implementation what is a very positive point for smaller companies."

The project started with the full support and commitment of the management of all the parties involved - CWA, Real Software and SAP. "This commitment is an essential ingredient of success in such an enterprise-wide project", sic Dominique Born. "It is a precondition to a successful implementation of SAP modules."

Project Approach

After a preliminary study dedicated to setting up the scope of the project, its resources and requirements, CWA began implementing the logistic modules in January 96. For each future area of activity, a key-user, an IT employee of CWA and a Real Software consultant were appointed. Support of SAP consultants was contractually defined - because of their deep product knowledge and awareness of the adjustments and extra functionalities in the new releases.

Key users played a vital role at various stages of the project, such as during the analysis and the testing phases. Their close involvement led later on to a higher degree of overall satisfaction after implementation was complete.

Experiences

In addition to the human skills and the total motivation of users and managers alike, the integrated nature of the SAP R/3 solution was and is THE vital success factor. Integration is quite an advantage, but it also requires some discipline - something we all had to learn.

Looking back at the positive results of their SAP experience, Mr Born also pointed to the role of the project leader, who has to provide internal as well as external support, the correct planning of the data conversion phase, and the connection to the SAP Online Service System (information and SAP Belgium helpdesk-communication database) from the earliest stages of the project.

Results

As a result of all these elements, CWA achieved its main restructuring objectives - better response times for customers, excellent stock control and an on-line overview of the company's position.

CWA further occupies today a very strong position to deal with the Euro and the Year 2000 - two highly challenging problems which are now under control thanks to the SAP R/3 software.

