

OPTIMIZING IT

LINDE GAS AND MERCURY

“Mercury Change Management™ can be implemented quickly. It is flexible and adaptable. We are impressed by it. It makes sure that new or updated software is made available on our live systems quickly, efficiently, with no errors, and at very low risk. The solution helps us realize individual workflows, every step of which can be reconstructed – from change request to final delivery and distribution.”

– Thomas Steinich, Manager Global Applications, Linde Gas AG

CHALLENGE

To formalize, standardize, and automate the process of taking new or modified electronic business processes in the SAP R/3 environment live, in accordance with the best practices defined in the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL). Linde Gas was looking for a solution that would provide no-gaps support for every step in the SAP Transport Management System.

SOLUTION

Mercury Change Management, a core module of Mercury IT Governance Center.

BUSINESS VALUE

With Mercury IT Governance offerings, Linde Gas achieved a change management process to carefully control the system-wide distribution of software updates. The result: no more system failures, less manual work, and projects completed on time and on budget.

Linde Gas AG is listed in the DAX index of Germany's 30 top blue-chip companies. Headquartered in Munich, the group occupies market-leading positions in all three of its business segments: Gas and Engineering, Material Handling, and Refrigeration. Last fiscal year, the Global Technology Group's workforce of approximately 46,500 people generated annual sales of more than \$8.7 billion.

To sharpen its competitive edge and make all its key business processes more transparent and more efficient, Linde Gas teamed up with its European subsidiaries to launch INTOUCH (going live in January 2005), a major strategic project. The aim was to harmonize and standardize operating procedures across national borders on the basis of a standard software environment. Starting in Germany, version 4.7 of SAP® R/3® software – including SAP Business Warehouse 3.1 – will be rolled out as a comprehensive application package for the planning, monitoring, and controlling of all business resources throughout Europe.

System Failure: A Major Business Risk

Change management suddenly became a mission-critical issue at Linde Gas AG. Change management is a multi-tiered process that administrators use to ensure that the system-wide distribution of software updates is carefully controlled.

“When you transport new configuration objects from the development environment to the live systems, everything has to be accurate and efficient,” explained Thomas Steinich, manager, Global Applications at Linde Gas AG. “To begin with, all distribution orders are thoroughly examined to detect any weak points. No updates can be distributed until every person responsible has approved them. Otherwise, live systems could go down. That is always expensive, and has potentially dramatic consequences for sales, employee productivity, and customer satisfaction.”

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In the past, the industrial gas producer's platform administrators had only used the Transport Management System (TMS) supplied with SAP R/3 software for this task. The tool itself made no provision for a structured procedure, however. There was no end-to-end workflow to govern the countless handovers in the change order path – at the interfaces between developers, departmental leaders, and platform administrators. And then there was the problem that data center staff was overloaded with unproductive routine tasks. Again and again, the SAP administrators had to trigger and monitor software distribution orders by hand.

To make its complex SAP landscape more transparent, more secure, and easier to monitor, especially in the context of changes and updates, Linde Gas wanted a software solution that would formalize, standardize, and automate every step in the SAP Transport Management process.

An Intuitive Tool with End-to-End Control

Once Linde Gas had conducted a detailed examination of what was available on the market, two solutions made it onto the short list. After a lengthy process of very careful evaluation, Mercury Change Management finally emerged as the clear winner. Mercury Change Management is a key module in Mercury IT Governance Center™, which features an SAP-certified integration.

“Mercury Change Management proved to be the superior solution in just about every respect,” Steinich said. “The software can be implemented quickly and adapted to individual requirements. It works under both Windows and UNIX operating systems. And the user interface is a straightforward Web browser, with which

everyone is familiar. We were able to create all the workflows and users we needed on our own as early as the test phase. Another important point was that the software from Mercury is validated by the FDA, with whose guidelines every company in our industry has to comply – even in the deployment and operation of their IT systems.”

Linde Gas successfully adapted and implemented Change Management in a very short period of time. Every aspect of the process defined in the INTOUCH project for taking software updates live could be modeled in the new solution, as could the customized authorizations concept. Today, Change Management underpins the automated, controlled distribution of new and/or modified SAP processes on the basis of a regulated information flow. Software is only distributed once it has been approved and exhaustively examined by all the relevant departments. Should delivery errors occur despite all these precautions, warning messages and proposed solutions are issued immediately to the relevant staff.

Change Management has given Linde Gas the ability to optimize its electronic business process on an ongoing basis, without risking the expense and annoyance of system failures. Already well established, the tool makes a valuable contribution to ensuring that the INTOUCH project is completed successfully on time and on budget.

“The software from Mercury has enabled us to build a sensible and efficient structure for the entire change management process,” Steinich concluded.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Linde Gas needed a software solution that would formalize, standardize, and automate every step in the SAP Transport Management process.
- The new solution had to control the entire change management process in a single, end-to-end workflow – from change request through testing and interim releases to live activation.
- Change Management now underpins the automated, controlled distribution of new and/or modified SAP software processes on the basis of a regulated information flow.

BENEFITS

- Linde Gas successfully adapted and implemented Mercury Change Management in a short timeframe.
- Linde Gas now has the ability to optimize its electronic business process on an ongoing basis, without risking the expense and annoyance of system failures.
- Mercury Change Management helped ensure that the INTOUCH project was completed successfully – on time and on budget.

MERCURY™

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