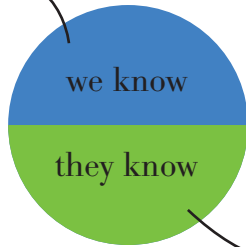


FAST



FORWARD



INALFA: STRENGTHENING PRODUCT DESIGN CAPABILITIES WITH IBM AND SSA GLOBAL

Challenge

Roll out a product lifecycle management (PLM) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution based on a new hardware platform

Solution

IBM @server® pSeries®, SSA® ERP; and SSA PLM

Why IBM?

The IBM @server pSeries met the company's need for a robust, cost-effective, high-performing hardware platform that could provide scalability for both current and future applications.

Key Benefits

Streamlined time-to-market and product-design processes; offered ability to leverage metrics to ensure and track competitive quoting capabilities; facilitated decision making capabilities; enhanced customer responsiveness and improved efficiencies

Inalfa Roof Systems was founded in the Netherlands in 1946 as a manufacturer of metal goods for wholesale companies, producing such items as knitting needles and curtain rails. After successfully manufacturing heaters during the next several decades, the company shifted creatively to producing formed metal parts for a variety of customers. Inalfa now serves the automotive industry as one of the world's leading providers of innovative vehicle roof systems and sunroofs, with sales of more than US\$400 million in 2005 and nearly 1,500 employees worldwide.

BOLSTERING PRODUCT DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

In 2003, Inalfa decided to utilize SSA ERP integrated engineering and SSA PLM solution sets throughout the company. The strategy was to design the system first for its European data center in Venray, the Netherlands; next for its Auburn Hills, Michigan-based North American location; and eventually expand into Asia.



Inalfa provides its customers with a multitude of engineering capabilities, from design to integration of roof systems into automobiles. As a result, product development features in SSA PLM sparked the company's interest.

A ROBUST, HIGH-PERFORMING HARDWARE SOLUTION

Says Bill Rice, Director of IT, Inalfa Roof Systems, "When we looked around at hardware that would offer us a reasonable solution set to meet our needs for robustness, that's when we really focused on an IBM **@server** hardware platform. We were also highly familiar with the IBM **@server** iSeries™ having had good experiences using IBM AS/400® systems and other IBM hardware within our CAD stations."

Since remote facilities within Inalfa would be accessing the system, the company needed to determine how much performance degradation and communication lag time it could withstand. Says Rice, "When we realized what the pSeries had to offer and learned about the benefits of IBM

POWER™ processors, we were sold. We also considered the potential benefits—such as optimized database performance—of having the same manufacturer for both the disk storage and servers."

Inalfa then decided to bring in IBM Premier Business Partner Sirius Computer Solutions to help design, configure and implement an IBM solution to support the applications and meet its data-recovery requirements. The largest reseller of IBM **@server** systems, Sirius has extensive experience designing IT infrastructure solutions for SSA Global applications that incorporate IBM servers, storage and software.

MONITORING THE EUROPEAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Auburn Hills site began to monitor the progress of the project rollout in Europe, eventually taking over implementing the solution, and expanding the kernel of the project to a worldwide reach. As the Netherlands-based implementation was wrapping up its final processes, the Auburn Hills facility then began its initial hardware rollout in mid-2005.

"We took approximately one year to thoroughly plan and observe what Venray was doing," says Rice. "Since we weren't directly involved, we had the luxury of being able to learn from the challenges that they were experiencing."

LEVERAGING LOGICAL PARTITIONING CAPABILITIES OF THE P SERIES

Early on, the company tapped Sirius as a sounding board for best practices, trends and potential pitfalls. "We didn't want to get into something where right off the bat we were undersized, and we didn't want to pay for technology that we weren't going to use," explains Rice. "We were trying to position our solution so that it met the requirements of our user community while being cost-effective." Accordingly, Inalfa took full advantage of the logical partitioning (LPAR) capability within the pSeries.

Sirius and Inalfa worked together to configure several pSeries systems with LPAR. As a result, Inalfa is tapping into the systems' dynamic resource allocation and virtualization features. Within one p570 system, the company is using several CPUs for production, one for testing and development, and one for backup.

Says Rice, "The dynamic allocation features enable us to bring in more horsepower if we need it, and the drivers are user-friendly. The pSeries hosts not only the SSA ERP applications, but also shop-floor and electronic data interchange (EDI) applications."

Rather than undertaking a full system-to-system disaster recovery solution, Inalfa considered what it had to accomplish for its key business processes—including shipping products, responding to customer requirements, along with maintaining EDI connectivity with automotive customers. Says Rice, "We needed to design the robustness of the p550, located at a remote facility, to be able to roll over in 15 minutes."

IBM, SSA GLOBAL AND SIRIUS: SERVING INALFA'S NEEDS

Speaking about the relationship between IBM and SSA Global, Rice notes that it was "always seamless." "They were both always upfront when discussing technology and the best solution for our needs," he says. "They always served our best interests."

Rice also comments about IBM Business Partner Sirius: "Whenever we had a question, they didn't even hesitate to bring in their specialists to work through solutions. We looked very intensely at the disaster recovery solution, best practices and available products from both IBM and others."

KEEPING A FINGER ON THE AUTOMOTIVE PULSE

The IBM and SSA Global solution has equipped Inalfa with the ability to:

- Streamline processes involved in moving from design to market
- Design products faster and more reliably
- Respond quickly to changing market conditions
- Leverage metrics to ensure and track competitive quoting capabilities
- Facilitate decision making by providing management with accurate, timely information
- Enhance customer responsiveness
- Reduce operational costs and improve efficiency
- Adopt best practices

Says Rice, "We've had a very positive response from the staff and consultants involved with the implementation. They've commented that there's a 'night and day difference' with our system configuration versus what they're used to working with."

ABOUT SIRIUS

Sirius helps customers design, implement and maintain their IT infrastructure with best-of-breed technology solutions. As a national IBM Premier Business Partner, Sirius designs IT infrastructure solutions for SSA Global applications that incorporate IBM servers, storage, software, enterprise printers, point-of-sale systems, professional services and financing.

ABOUT SSA GLOBAL

SSA Global™ (NASDAQ: SSAG) is a leading provider of extended ERP solutions for manufacturing, distribution, retail, services and public organizations worldwide. In addition to core ERP applications, SSA Global offers a full range of integrated extension solutions including corporate performance management, customer relationship management, product lifecycle management, supply chain management and supplier relationship management. Headquartered in Chicago, SSA Global has 63 locations worldwide, and its product offerings are used by approximately 13,000 active customers in over 90 countries. For additional information, visit the SSA Global Web site at www.ssaglobal.com.

Upgrading its server technology to IBM **@server** pSeries systems has enabled Inalfa to better compete within the automotive industry. "We have a very proactive executive team that recognizes the need for technology for its competitive edge," notes Rice. "We've done a remarkable job of maintaining focus of both business parameters and implementation needs. The solution is helping us keep our finger on the pulse of our industry."

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The company is seeking to further expand its solution set to meet the needs of a third data center within the next few years. To that end, Rice notes that Inalfa will be keeping in touch with IBM and Sirius for technology advances. "Since technology changes so quickly, several years from now we obviously won't be deploying the exact footprint as this implementation. Working with IBM, I can feel assured that we're using the best possible hardware."

When the company initially engaged a solution from both IBM and SSA Global, it was looking at which competencies the two companies could offer for future implementation requirements. "This is not the last stop," explains Rice. "We're rolling this out across the board globally, and IBM and SSA Global can help us overcome many potential barriers. It's a very positive relationship."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out more, please contact your IBM or SSA Global sales representative, or visit us at:

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