

Aalborg Portland prints business documents from SAP with LaserNet

"SAP's an awesome ERP system, but it's even better with LaserNet onboard"

Head of IT at Aalborg Portland, Morten Frederiksen:



Challenge

To make it possible to print lots of different business documents on several different languages from SAP.

To find a flexible output solution that was easy to set up and maintain and could work with SAP ERP.

Software

ERP: SAP ERP

Solution

LaserNet Base Module, Developer, LaserNet Communication Module and LaserNet Conversion Module, XML-IN Module, File Module, SAP RDI Module and a number of printer licenses.

Why LaserNet?

LaserNet is the most userfriendly tool for handling and distributing business documents.

Is it for you?

LaserNet can be used with all IT applications and platforms, and reduces the costs of document production and distribution. At the same time, LaserNet enables your company to supply documents in all formats to your business partners, such as print, e-mail, fax, pdf og XML..



In 2005 we replaced our old, self-developed ERP system with SAP ERP, something we've never regretted, as it's a brilliant ERP system. But when we need to generate good-looking invoices, order confirmations and other documents needing to be sent hard copy – for that we use LaserNet. It's not only much quicker to use than SAP, it's also much more flexible - in terms of output."

These are the words of Morten Frederiksen, MSc in Business Economics, who since 2002 has been head of IT at Aalborg Portland's Danish division. Aalborg Portland employs almost 1,700 people worldwide and generates a global annual turnover of more than DKK 3 billion.

The company was Danish-owned until 2004, but has since formed a part of the Italian-owned cement group Cementir Holding. SAP is used at the group's other companies in Italy and Turkey, so the decision was taken to introduce it at Aalborg Portland too. Implementation of SAP began in 2006 and the system was commissioned in 2007.

SAP doesn't quite make it

This switch from an older, self-developed ERP system to a large and well-reputed standard ERP system went smoothly, and was generally welcomed in the company.

Customers and suppliers, who previously received invoices, purchase orders and other business documentation from Aalborg Portland in electronic form, e.g. in EDIFACT or XML formats, now receive them directly from SAP via Microsoft BizTalk, which the company chose as a platform for data integration of SAP ERP in 2006.

But for those customers wishing to receive traditional, hard copy documents or PDFs by e-mail, SAP ERP provides these via LaserNet Output Management, as Frederiksen explains:



About Aalborg Portland

Copenhagen-based Aalborg Portland A/S develops and sells cement made at its own factories in Denmark, Egypt, Malaysia and China.

The company is a part of the Italian-owned Cementir Holding Group, and in 2009 made a turnover of DKK 3.314 billion and employed upwards of 1,600 people.



"SAP's an excellent ERP system for a production company like ours. But when it comes to formatting hard copy output such as invoices, SAP is heavy going, because it's both time-consuming and technically difficult to format the documents in SAP to meet the company's specific requirements."

As a part of the SAP implementation process it was proposed that the company should set up the required hard copy output directly from SAP ERP. Frederiksen, however, regarded the pure

SAP solution as both unreasonably expensive and difficult to maintain. The company looked around for a more flexible and easier-to-maintain solution, which could form the basis of the ongoing development of various forms of electronic communication with customers and suppliers.

Having surveyed the available options, Aalborg Portland decided on the LaserNet Output Management solution from the Danish company FormPipe Software. LaserNet offered the desired flexibility and could be purchased and installed at a lower cost than the stand-alone SAP solution. LaserNet has now been in operation for three years and is used by Aalborg Portland to format and print 39 different business documents in four languages. The program is now being introduced together with SAP ERP at subsidiary Unicorn, which produces concrete. LaserNet handles there another 17 types of document in three languages.

Automatic language control

LaserNet itself decides the language of the documentation and how the data fields are to appear on the page, based on the customer-specific country code the program receives for SAP.

And for those customers wishing to receive their documents as PDF files by e-mail, by using SAP data, LaserNet automatically generates a PDF document and attaches it to an e-mail. This saves paper, envelopes, handling, and postage.

Great flexibility

As Frederiksen explains, after three years they are still very happy with their LaserNet solution at Aalborg Portland:

"Because of my background as an economist I look at both the technical and financial aspects of IT procurements. LaserNet's been a fine investment in both respects. From a business perspective, LaserNet has for the last three years formed the basis of flexible adjustments to both the layout and content of our commercial documentation, as well as allowing us to continually create new print and PDF solutions around SAP ERP. LaserNet's a more flexible tool than SAP ERP when it comes to formatting, layouts and graphics for printing. On the technical side, earlier versions of LaserNet presented us with some challenges, but things are now much improved thanks to ongoing software updates."

LaserNet does it in minutes, not hours

To illustrate the gulf between formatting options in SAP on the one hand and formatting options in LaserNet on the other, Frederiksen mentions that in 2008 when Aalborg Portland needed to change its old, blue company logo to the Cementir red-C, it only took about 5 minutes' working with LaserNet to install the new logo and update the footers of all the output documents, because with LaserNet you only need to do this in one place. Had the company not used LaserNet, the same change would have needed hours of consultant support, since the change in this case would have had to have been made in each of the 39 SAP document types.

One can be left in no doubt about what Morten Frederiksen thinks of LaserNet: "Lasernet's given us the flexibility we wanted when printing from SAP ERP, and now, along with Microsoft BizTalk, it forms a cornerstone of our SAP ERP communication platform. And it does it all at no extra cost to us. Not to mention we've made savings along the way by adjusting the layout and content of our business documents in LaserNet."

FORMPIPE

FormPipe Software's programs help organizations to gather, manage and distribute information and to place it in the correct context.

Reduced costs, minimised risk exposure and structured information are all benefits that stem from using FormPipe Software's products.

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