

Olympus Winter & Ibe GmbH

Olympus uses Micro Focus® Verastream® Host Integrator to optimize just-in-time production of surgical instruments.

Overview

Olympus Winter & Ibe GmbH (a division of the Olympus Medical Group) is a technology leader in the field of minimally invasive surgery. The company develops and produces diagnostic and therapeutic instruments, including fibre-scopes and rod lens and video endoscopes.

As a global company, Olympus must be able to quickly roll out applications to new factories worldwide. To that end, Olympus needed to streamline its kanban just-in-time method for manufacturing endoscopic systems. But they couldn't do that without simplifying access to host-based data and optimizing production-level processes. So they employed Verastream Host Integrator to get the job done.

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Head of Application Development
Olympus Winter & Ibe GmbH

Challenge

Olympus uses an IT-supported E-kanban production process based on the kanban lean-manufacturing model. At the time, employees generated orders from their workplaces using a production data acquisition (PDA) system developed in-house with .NET. The orders were transferred to an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system from Baan (now operating as Infor) running on an HP e3000. Baan then triggered fabrication, warehouse, or transfer orders.

Generating orders in Baan was complex, as a series of plausibility checks had to be executed concurrently. Another issue involved the .NET programs, which had had to be modified for every update of the back-end system. This requirement created a bottleneck that was irreconcilable with the kanban control approach. “Once the order was generated by the employee at the production level, it took, at best, several minutes until resupply was completed,” said Uwe Schnittert, the head of application development at Olympus. “This process resulted in waiting times for production and standstills in the materials flow.”

The team had two options: (1) create real-time control in Baan and replicate the logic in the ERP system, or (2) control the system remotely. “Implementing the solution with Baan tools



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At a Glance

■ Industry

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■ Location

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■ Challenge

Production bottlenecks and lags in the materials flow were irreconcilable with the company's kanban control approach.

■ Solution

Use Verastream Host Integrator to enable the kanban just-in-time model by simplifying access to host-based data and optimizing production-level processes.

■ Results

- + Synchronized back-end updates and enabled order generation in production.
- + Automated processes for pricing, label printing, and warehouse transfer postings.
- + Accelerated the rollout of new applications for factories across the globe.
- + Supported the transition to a service-oriented architecture (SOA).

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would have been extremely time-consuming. What's more, we would have created just another proprietary local solution,” said Schnittert.

Instead, Olympus wanted a solution that could be implemented quickly, accommodate future expansion, and support the company's transition to a service-oriented architecture (SOA). Olympus also wanted to avoid tying itself to one programming language.

Solution

Based on the organization's positive experience with Reflection® software, Olympus took a look at Verastream Host Integrator. Verastream Host Integrator encapsulates mainframe data and logic via the application interface. It transforms the host and UNIX applications into SOA assets by exposing business processes as web services, XML, Java, or .NET components. It can also integrate data on the transaction and database levels.

“The best thing about Verastream is that the host applications don't need to be modified,” said Schnittert. “In just a short time the consultants had built a solution that we could use in our production processes. And thanks to Verastream, we can now adopt new IT processes and architectures.”

The switch to Verastream went off without a hitch. Verastream's easy-to-use tools accelerated the replication of host functionality. As part of the first step in this process, interface adapters are configured to access the host data. The data sources are tapped via the Verastream server; the engine handles the load balancing and is capable of automatic failover in the event of a crash.

Verastream's advanced functionality ensures complete transparency. The Verastream design tool records each step a user takes within the Baan system, and users can subsequently edit the process whenever necessary.

For added ease of use, developers can document the process as a database table, a procedure, or a service. “The recorded workflow can be represented graphically, so we can discuss and refine the process with the operational department,” says Schnittert.

Developers can also edit generated modules using tools like Eclipse or Visual Studio .NET and link them with other applications to create composite applications. In addition to order generation in production, Olympus also created new processes for warehouse transfer postings, production-label printing, and pricing.

Results

After several months of live operation, Schnittert and his team are already working on follow-up projects. “Deploying Verastream pays off wherever we need information in real time and the processes in Baan are complex,” Schnittert said.

Today, his team can easily execute processes from the host system in a new technological environment. “The overall benefit is that we can do a lot more with fewer people, and can ensure a high level of transparency and precision,” said Schnittert. “We had an excellent level of support from Attachmate (now part of Micro Focus) at all phases of the project, from pre-sales to implementation, and we are confident that we can continue to depend on them at all times.”



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