

Schenker AB

Schenker's new portal, powered by Micro Focus® Verastream® Host Integrator, improves customer and employee satisfaction.



Overview

Schenker AB, a leading provider of integrated logistics services, supports the global exchange of goods via land, air, and sea. Headquartered in Gothenburg, Sweden, the company employs 4,000 people and has 42,000 contract customers.

The problem Schenker faced was this: A lack of front- to back-end systems integration resulted in long caller wait times, a lost-call rate of 20 percent, and high employee turnover. To reverse these trends, Schenker employed Verastream Host Integrator.

Challenge

Schenker employs about 300 people in 28 customer service units across the country. They are tasked with supporting both domestic and cross-border transport, as well as storage.

“Verastream is especially suited for organizations whose legacy mainframe systems provide mission-critical functions for their business processes. At Schenker, Verastream helped to improve both customer and employee satisfaction. You can’t underestimate the value of that for any company.”

KJELL JENNSTIG

Consultant
Cap Gemini Ernst & Young Group

Each week the customer service group handles some 25,000 calls. Sixty-five percent of the calls are related to transport reservations. The rest typically relate to pricing, delivery times, or invoicing. One of the most frequently asked questions is, “When will my shipment arrive?”

Before Verastream, even simple questions took an average of 2.5 minutes to answer. Contact center agents often had to retrieve 30 discrete pieces of information—including contact, price, and invoice data—from applications on multiple systems. Sometimes, when accessing one system, agents would be timed-out of another, forcing them to start over.

The longer customers had to wait, first for the phone to be answered and then for agents to collect information, the more frustrated they got. Some customers refused to wait at all. Schenker calculated that 20 percent of incoming callers hung up before they spoke to anybody.

The volume of calls combined with angry customers created stressful working conditions. Agents got lots of practice making small talk. Eventually, retaining employees was difficult.

Solution

“The business goal was to regain both customer and employee satisfaction by cutting contact center agent response time,” said Ulf Pettersson, IT project manager at Schenker. “The technology goal was to replace our obsolete system without jeopardizing mission-critical information.”



At a Glance

■ Industry

Distribution

■ Location

Sweden

■ Challenge

A lack of systems integration was causing long caller wait times, lost calls, and employee turnover.

■ Solution

Use Verastream Host Integrator to build an online portal that integrated seven different legacy applications.

■ Results

- + Boosted employee productivity.
- + Reduced training time and costs.
- + Increased revenue by decreasing lost calls.

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It’s stable and well-designed.”**

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After some research, Pettersson's team constructed an economical portal solution and named it Shipment Information OnLine. Through the portal, users would be able to access seven applications on disparate systems, including IBM mainframe, IBM AS/400, and UNIX hosts. Pettersson's team then needed to integrate the seven underlying legacy applications with the new portal. Kjell Jennstig, a Cap Gemini Ernst & Young Group consultant working on the project, recommended Verastream Host Integrator.

Jennstig had used Verastream before with positive results. “I was able to work with the product after just a few hours,” he said. “It’s stable and well-designed. And the support I got from Attachmate’s (now part of Micro Focus) European organization was a tremendous asset to me during implementation.”

Verastream Host Integrator encapsulates mainframe data and logic via the screen interface, exposing business processes as web services, XML, Java, and .NET. components. The Verastream-generated services can be mixed, matched, and reused to build composite applications with a new look and feel. No matter what your environment—IBM, UNIX, or HP—Verastream delivers rapid results because you can use existing development skills and familiar IT tools. No mainframe code changes are required.

Schenker's web-development architecture, based on HTTP and XML, is essentially a form of web services. The design work for this project fell within that architecture. Verastream is installed on a Windows server. A Java application, built by the Cap Gemini Ernst & Young Group, interfaces with IBM WebSphere MQ (MQ

Series). On the client side, JSPs (JavaServer Pages) retrieve and display the information from WebSphere MQ.

Results

Within a few months of implementation, the new system had already boosted contact center agent productivity.

Now when customers ask about arrival times, agents can answer promptly. They no longer need to log on to each individual system. Instead, they simply enter the waybill number and wait for the portal to query the underlying back-office applications on the status of each event in the transport process. The relevant loading, unloading, delivery, or storage information is sent to agents almost instantly.

“The new portal system lets me view all important transport documents immediately,” said Kristina Eriksson, a Stockholm-based contact center agent. “It even includes the functions for looking up both export and import deliveries. I can work so much faster than I could before.”

Faster response times are responsible for reducing the number of unanswered calls and increasing the number of transport reservations processed. Training time and costs are also down—which means Schenker's bottom line is up.

“Verastream is especially suited for organizations whose legacy mainframe systems provide mission-critical functions for their business processes,” said Jennstig. “At Schenker, Verastream helped to improve both customer and employee satisfaction. You can't underestimate the value of that for any company.”



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