



Friedrich Hörauf
CEO
GCA Consulting
 Last Updated: 04/09/08

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Topic	Response
<p>1 <i>Good morning, I am talking to Mr. Friedrich Hörauf, CEO of the GCA Company for project management. Could you tell me something about your company?</i></p>	<p>Certainly. The company GCA is an engineering company focusing its business activities on project management, general construction planning, for new constructions and commercial buildings and that also provides project management training.</p> <p>We currently have three offices. The main office is in Nuremberg in Germany. In addition, we also have an office in the Kingdom of Bahrain in the city of Munamar, and we have an office in Prague in the Czech Republic. We currently have 50 employees. I am one of the two managing partners. I am mainly responsible for the project management business; my partner is in charge of the training segment, which constitutes approx. 10% of our returns.</p>
<p>2 <i>Which were the main business objectives and challenges that led GCA to look for a new application solution such as SAP Business One in connection with Project Management?</i></p>	<p>The main reason was that we wanted to increase productivity, and since we did not have an integrated data management system, we spent a lot of time and effort to quickly gather information, business information about employee assignments. The data was stored in several different systems, which is why we looked for a system that would provide us with access to integrated data, starting from the customer address to the balance sheet.</p>
<p>3 <i>Could you describe your original IT environment and how this environment possibly hampered your ability to reach your business objectives?</i></p>	<p>Well, the original IT environment that we - well let me start with accounting. Our company used the accounting software from Datev. That is a big software company in Germany. Then we also had an address manager, an internally developed database, where a lot of employee information and project data was filed, and then, additionally, various excel files. So, our IT environment was very heterogeneous. And this leads to issues of double data management, no integrated data, and therefore increased time and effort spent. Those were the main reason why we wanted to switch.</p>
<p>4 <i>What was one of the most important objectives you wanted to achieve with a new solution?</i></p>	<p>As I just mentioned, the objectives were to obtain information quickly, integrated data management, and, well, of course also a better cost accounting.</p>



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Topic	Response
<p>5 <i>Could you tell me a little about the process you used to select your provider?</i></p>	<p>Well, our requirement was a uniform system that includes all processes of a project. Another issue was the budget and the timeline. Since we are a small company with 50 employees, mainly the two managing directors and one company officer were involved in the selection process.</p>
<p>6 <i>What were the most important selection criteria for the provider solutions?</i></p>	<p>The main criteria were that we would be able to cover customer relationship management, that we would have an integrated data management for our customer and supplier addresses, that we would get integrated accounting data, integrated project development data including time keeping capabilities, online management for employees, and connected cost accounting.</p> <p>We looked around on the market, but did not make a direct comparison. We only consulted with the Datev manufacturer, since we are using their accounting and cost accounting system. The competitors could not offer anything that came close to what we wanted. And then we came across SAP Business One with the partner solution. We liked it right away, because we were able to see that it could meet our needs.</p>
<p>7 <i>After you had generated the selection plan, the evaluation process began. Can you tell us something about the evaluation process with regard to the solution?</i></p>	<p>The evaluation process with regard to the solution consisted initially of studying printed material and information. The SAP partner then gave a presentation of the product. We took about six months to make our decision, but of course not exclusively, since a decision making process sort of takes place in addition to the other work we do.</p>



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<p>8 <i>What specific aspects led you to select the SAP Business One Solution with Project Management and not other competitive solutions?</i></p>	<p>Well, as I had mentioned before, the product or the product offering reflected our requirements. We saw ourselves in the product, with our requirements, the continuity of data from start to finish were basically the main aspects. We were able to map everything we had done in many different systems, with this one system.</p> <p>Well, what are the most important advantages ... I think, one advantage is the fact that the partner, the SAP partner is located in Germany, and that we work together very well. What is the advantage compared to others? I cannot specifically say, since we did not research others to this length. We just felt that the product met our needs. And then we just made a decision, you know?</p>
	<p><i>Were there possibly any internal concerns regarding SAP Business One?</i></p> <p>Yes, there were some concerns. Concerns regarding the question if the product would be stable, concerns from the accounting side mostly, indicating that the accounting operations are cumbersome, and that it would be very work-intensive to obtain respective analyses. These concerns were raised, because we had been using the accounting system from Datev. According to our accounting department, it is much easier to use. In this area, SAP is more cumbersome in this regard. And this is why we met with a lot of resistance from the accounting department.</p>
<p>9 <i>Can you tell me something about your experience with the overall implementation?</i></p>	<p>Well, the implementation process took about 90 days or three months. It mainly involved accounting, the project managers and the management, and then also two part-time support staff. We were able to implement the system within the planned amount of time and were able to start using the product on the scheduled day, i.e. January 1, 2007. Yes, the expenses were within the budget. Which means, we spent what we had projected we would be spending.</p>



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Topic	Response
<p>10 <i>What were the most important challenges you encountered during the implementation? What problems did you encounter and how were they solved?</i></p>	<p>Well, there were two main issues that presented a certain challenge for us. On the one hand, it is extremely important to determine the exact structure of the system prior to the implementation or at the beginning of the implementation. This meant that we had to change certain processes we had been using in the company, in order to be able to use the new system in this regard. It was very important, to determine this in advance within the context of workshops and meetings. The second issue is the data transfer from the various existing systems to a now integrated data system. Also in this regard, certain preparations and coordination initiatives with the provider were necessary, determining how to transfer the data, what to do with redundant data, which must additionally be made available for us to get the system up and running. The term master data collection came up in this respect.</p> <p>Well, those were the main challenges, and it is absolutely critical to come up with clean solutions for them. Otherwise, we would probably have had significant problems during the start-up phase.</p>
<p>11 <i>Was the SAP implementation perceived as disruptive for business operations?</i></p>	<p>No, it was a lot of work, but we did it in a way that did not disrupt our business operations. Well, I cannot say disrupt. It was the additional work. We also included additional staff members in order to prevent the implementation from disrupting operations. We had included that in advance in our plans.</p>
<p>12 <i>Could you tell me a little about your experience at the time the system was used for the first time?</i></p>	<p>Yes. Well, experience has shown that initially, despite having trained the staff, and because the system has many capabilities.</p> <p>Initially, you just need more time to, for example, generate invoices, or to enter something, just because there is a lack of experience. Also, there is a certain learning curve until the system has been integrated into the standard process. This learning curve, well, we had anticipated that there would be a learning curve. It took about three months, which is what we had figured. The processing times improved each month.</p>
<p>13 <i>When you consider everything you have learned in the meantime and what works well, what advice would you give to someone who is just about to start such a project?</i></p>	<p>Well, someone, who is just about to start such a project, must be aware from the beginning what he wants to do with such a product, what he wants to achieve. He must define his objective, define his processes, must clearly determine areas of responsibility within the company and who will be in charge of the internal project, who will manage and who will be responsible for what. It is also important to thoroughly train staff members that will be working with the system, to train them close to the time they will start using the system.</p>



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Topic	Response
<p>14 <i>How would you describe your experiences with SAP in general?</i></p>	<p>Yes, the system is good. It has lots of capabilities. But when you only work with it now and again, with the entire system, its utilization is a little unclear and confusing. All my colleagues feel that way, too. But if you work with it in a reasonable manner, you will be just fine.</p>
	<p><i>And SAP overall, are you satisfied with it?</i></p>
	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>15 <i>How quickly did the users get used to Business One with Project Management? And how did they react to the new system?</i></p>	<p>Well, the user acceptance was such that the core team had gotten used to it within three months. The employees who work with it at the job site and had to use the system also, also got used to it within the first few months so that we had no significant problems</p>
	<p><i>And, in your opinion, how long did it take the users to get used to it?</i></p>
	<p>Well, about three months.</p>
	<p><i>And when there were issues, how did you solve them?</i></p>
	<p>Well, the problems that occurred during the implementation were solved by having two part-time employees that had trained the employees during the implementation process and who continued to be available on-site as a support resource, i.e. the employees were able to get help from on-site employees that could help them work with the system. That worked quite well.</p>
	<p><i>Can you maybe give me a specific example for a problem?</i></p>
	<p>Yes, it is connected with two separate issues. Our employees must use the system for their monthly travel expense report by using the internet module, because some of our employees are located throughout the world at our job-sites. And the regulations for travel expense reports are very detailed, also from a tax perspective, with regard to how they should be process. And that requires a certain procedure in the system, in the SAP system, to be able to process travel expenses. And that was initially a little confusing for our employees and required additional explanation, but as I said, after three months, everything worked fine. Then it became a routine process, and everybody knows how to do it.</p>



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Topic	Response
<p>16 <i>What measurable overall return on investment were you able to achieve through the implementation of the SAP solution and how much time did it take after the implementation, until these kinds of benefits became noticeable?</i></p>	<p>Well, I cannot necessarily put this in numbers. But we assume that the quick access, access to information by the project managers and management, by the CRM management, quotation processing, and opportunity processing led to significant changes within six to nine months.</p> <p>For a service provider, it is a little difficult to put this in numbers. We would have to calculate individual hour or minute savings and allocate an amount to them, and that is a little difficult.</p> <p>But let me add this, though. We project that the software introduction will also allow the company to grow, to increase the number of its employees, to at least double it without any problems by using the same support staff it has now. And that was also one of the reasons for the new solution. We wanted to implement something that is future-oriented and that can support our respective growth.</p> <p><i>Without having to give any specific figures, do you think that your return on investment has increased?</i></p> <p>Yes, I would imagine that the return on investment has increased.</p> <p><i>How about a quicker reaction to market needs, actions being taken quicker than before?</i></p> <p>Well, a quick reaction is possible, because initially, we have access to customer information and other information we need, about offers, about the offer process, about a project process much faster than we used to. We no longer have to look it up in a file or retrieve it from various systems, but, instead, you can obtain the information from the computer in a very short amount of time.</p>



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Topic	Response
<p>17 <i>With regard to the overall implementation cost of SAP Business One with Project Management for engineering firms - how do they compare to the overall cost of your old system?</i></p>	<p>The mere product cost and maintenance cost for the SAP System with Project Management is higher than before. But we believe that the positive effects we are noticing now with regard to the management of the company will off-set the expenses and lead to a positive result. Therefore, the higher cost should not be the deciding factor.</p>
<p>18 <i>Could you describe your experience with the support after the implementation?</i></p>	<p>Well, let me say first of all that the experience after the implementation was basically good. You get faster and better and can obtain information faster and faster. Where we had repeated difficulties was when trying to import updates. We had to spend a lot of time on the phone with the support department of the company that is servicing us. Sometimes, the updates have led to, let me say, calculation errors, and when that happens, you become a little unsure. This is something the employees do not exactly see as a positive thing, but we had always been able to solve the problems within a relatively short period of time.</p>
<p>19 <i>How would you respond to the claim that SAP is only suitable for large companies?</i></p>	<p>Well, no, I don't think that SAP is only something for large companies. Well, because simply, this is what you hear about SAP in general; it is possible that it is the big system that is used by large companies. But our software costs correspond exactly to our calculations. They are not significantly higher than what we had anticipated, and therefore, I believe that it is not just something for large companies, looking at the cost side. Also the availability of data is for a small company such as ours as important as it is for a large company.</p>
<p>20 <i>Are you satisfied with your choice, your SAP and project management solution for engineering firms?</i></p>	<p>Yes, we are satisfied with it. Well, I guess I am going to repeat myself a little here, but we are just satisfied, because we now have an integrated data management, that is the most important factor, and then also that we have quick access to information, that we only have to input data one single time and that it is available anywhere. We only have to enter an address into the system one time and then it is available throughout the company. And that is just a simple example. Basically, the system currently meets our requirements. There are a few things we would like to do, and that the system can probably do, but we have to build the system successively. But currently, the system does exactly what we needed it to do, and that is why we are satisfied.</p>



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<p>21 <i>Are there any areas in this solution, where SAP with Project Management could be improved?</i></p>	<p><i>Well, what should be improved, but I only know what my accounting department is telling me, is that the accounting system could be improved with regard to operations, processing, and the transparency of its structure. That came across very clearly from accounting. One of the reasons is that we used to work with another accounting system that very many companies in Germany use and accounting has clearly said that that system was easier to operate and that it had a more transparent structure. So this is where we feel some improvements could be made, and the fact that we would like to integrate a document management system. This is something, we would like to do, but we will find a solution somehow.</i></p>
<p>22 <i>Would you recommend SAP and Project Management for engineering firms to others?</i></p>	<p>Yes, I would recommend it, yes. Well, for the same reasons why we like it. So, basically, I no longer have a redundant data management, but I have everything in one program and can manage the entire company process with it.</p>
<p>23 <i>We are almost at the end of this interview segment. Could you please summarize your biggest challenges or problems that you had prior to implementing the SAP Business One with Project Management for engineering firms, and could you describe the most significant changes in your business that were made possible by SAP Business One and Project Management.</i></p>	<p>Okay, what problems did we have before? We have several individual solutions, leading to varying data management, i.e. information had to be transferred by hand, leading to a higher error rate, therefore more time spent etc. To make this process more integrated, the system was implemented and this is exactly where we were able to achieve an improvement.</p>
<p>24 <i>How did you select Maringo as your implementation partner?</i></p>	<p>Well, the reason why we picked Maringo is clearly connected with the application functionality provided by Maringo. Maringo offers exactly what we need in terms of project management in an engineering firm. In connection with the features of SAP Business One, we were able to achieve an integrated solution.</p>



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25 <i>How did Maringo support your product selection process?</i>	The Maringo management gave a very convincing presentation. And the managing director, Mr. Sauermann, worked with us during the implementation phase, gave workshops and covered the respective implementation issues that were required by the spec sheet.
26 <i>What role did your partner Maringo play with regard to the implementation process?</i>	Well, it played a role, because we discussed our internal processes with the company. It worked with us to come up with solution options on how to cover these processes with the system or, if needed, adapt processes to reach our objectives.
27 <i>To what extent did the knowledge your partner Maringo has about your company influence the implementation results?</i>	Well, his knowledge about our company let me put it this way: The product pretty much offers what we need, and Maringo, and particularly Mr. Sauermann, knew enough to be able to help us execute the implementation process without any problems.
28 <i>Would you recommend your partner Maringo to other companies considering implementing SAP?</i>	Yes, I would do that. Well, their support is very good, the hotline is always staffed and we feel well taken care of by the company.