

CASE STUDY

Schwenk Zement Improved UNIX Print Management Yields Concrete Benefits

Since 1847, the company Schwenk Zement KG (Schwenk) has been producing one of the most versatile and useful construction materials known to the world: cement.

Today, Schwenk's business is primarily focused on the production, sales, and distribution of cement, concrete, and other building supplies. Most of their business processes are document-driven. Like concrete, information is only valuable to Schwenk if it can be delivered to the right location in a timely manner.



MISSION-CRITICAL SAP OUTPUT

From the truck drivers who transport cement and concrete to job sites to employees in payroll, accounting, and other departments – everyone at Schwenk depends on timely, cost-effective delivery of business-critical documents. Today, most of the core business systems at Schwenk are running as SAP applications on zSeries and other

IBM platforms. Among the SAP modules implemented at Schwenk are:

- Sales & Distribution (SD)
- Materials Management (MM)
- Financials / Controlling (FI/CO)
- Human Resources (HR)
- Production Planning (PP)

Stefan Lima of Schwenk's IT group is one of the people charged with ensuring the reliability of SAP printing. "We have approximately 120 servers in our environment, most of which are located in a single data center. These servers host applications that are accessed by more than 1200 users via Windows, Citrix, and other clients. Eight hundred of these users work with SAP applications."

According to Lima, most of the company's 300 printers are Lexmark PCL devices. Schwenk purchased special IPDS data stream conversion cards for many of these printers so they could function with the company's previous output management system.

PROBLEMS WITH SAP PRINTING

Gerhard Kaminski, head of the IT Department at Schwenk, summarized the company's SAP printing situation. "We had implemented one of the most popular SAP output management systems from a well-known vendor, fully integrating this software into our business processes." Unfortunately for Schwenk, the vendor dropped support for the version of software Schwenk was running.

"Not only did they tell us they would no longer support us, they presented us with a large bill to purchase the new version and several years of pre-paid maintenance," said Kaminski. What's more, the new version of the vendor's software was no longer certified for compatibility by SAP.

Shocked and upset, the company tried to negotiate a more reasonable price while looking for a SAP-certified alternative to the vendor's output management system.

"VPSX™: IT JUST WORKS."

During this time, another vendor working at Schwenk told them about a new open systems output management

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A German manufacturing and distribution company replaced their outdated SAP printing system with software from LRS. The VPSX solution reduced software costs, eliminated the need for hundreds of data stream conversion cards, and installed in a matter of days.

solution being offered by Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc. (LRS). With thousands of customers around the world and a strong presence in Germany, LRS was a name already known to employees in Schwenk's IT department. The timing could not have been better.

Says Lima: "I contacted LRS and explained our situation. Within days, they visited us and showed us the capabilities of their VPSX solution. As it looked like a great fit, they offered to come on-site to install it in our test environment." However, Schwenk's IT professionals had other ideas.

"We find that we learn more about a software product's strengths and weaknesses by installing and configuring it on our own," explains Lima. In this case, the education process was a quick one: "It took only one day for us to install and configure the system. Aside from a few phone calls to learn about certain advanced features, we were able to configure the system entirely on our own. Defining printers is extremely simple, and managing them is even easier. For once, we found a product that just works."

VPSX TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGES

The simple configuration and quick setup of the VPSX solution was an important consideration for Schwenk, since they did not want to keep running their existing production SAP printing solution in an unsupported state. Aside from easy configuration, the team found many reasons to favor the VPSX software.

"We soon realized the limitations of our old solution," said Lima. "Although we had chosen a very sophisticated system, we still found that over 20% of our total support and help desk calls involved printing." Schwenk technicians also noticed the amount of processing power required for converting data streams from SAP native format to IPDS, then to PCL. "This process consumed expensive processing cycles, not to mention the cost to purchase and install a special card in each printer."

By contrast, the VPSX solution enables users and administrators to diagnose and solve printing problems on their own, using a customizable web interface. This can significantly reduce the burden on help desk and other technical staff, while minimizing end user delays.

The VPSX product also eliminated the need for hundreds of IPDS data stream conversion cards. Using a simple filter process, the solution automatically converts SAP barcodes, logos, and other resources directly to the printers' native PCL format. "The elimination of unnecessary conversions to and from IPDS represents a huge saving," says Lima.

The technical aspects of the VPSX solution impressed Kaminski, but he kept working on the commercial side to find a way to keep the existing system in place. "No IT manager wants to change critical systems unless it's absolutely necessary," says Kaminski.

As with the technical aspects of the trial, Kaminski found the VPSX commercial terms more attractive than those of their existing solution. "LRS' total annual costs

were less than half those of our existing solution. Plus, we have full access to newer versions of the software at no additional cost. The fact that VPSX was fully certified by SAP was another important factor," says Kaminski.

For technical and commercial reasons alike, Schwenk decided to convert to the VPSX solution. "LRS negotiated fairly from the very beginning. In the long run, this is the way any partner expects to be treated. Both the LRS products and people have proven themselves trustworthy and reliable."

LRS SOLUTION:

VPSX: This open systems output server provides robust output management for critical SAP applications at Schwenk Zement KG. The solution acts as a single point of control for managing SAP output to hundreds of remote printers in the Schwenk corporate network.

VPSX/OutputManager™: This standards-based solution from LRS is fully certified for SAP NetWeaver and utilizes the BC-XOM callback interface to handle SAP application output.

LRS Offices

North America

Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc.
2401 West Monroe Street
Springfield, IL 62704
USA

Phone: (217) 793-3800
Fax: (217) 787-0979
E-mail: asklrs@lrs.com

United Kingdom

Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc. U.K.
Regent House
Rodney Road
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire, GL50 1HX
United Kingdom

Phone: 44-1242 537 500
Fax: 44-1242 537 501
E-mail: LRSUK@lrs.com

Spain

Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc.
Sucursal en España
Princesa, 24, 1º Izda
28008 Madrid
Spain

Phone: + 34 91 541 8108
Fax: + 34 91 541 9874
E-mail: Spain@lrs.com

Germany

Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc.
Ludwigstraße 47
D-85399
Hallbergmoos
Germany

Phone: +49 (0)811/99 73 90
Fax: +49 (0)811/99 73 9 11
E-mail: Munich@lrs.com

Italy

Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc.
Viale Lodovico Scarampo 19
20148 Milano
Italy

Phone: + 39 349 6853033
Fax: + 39 02 48102588
Email: Italy@lrs.com

Australia

Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc.
Level 6, Suite 11
100 Walker Street
North Sydney NSW
Australia 2060

Phone: 612-9922-3800
Fax: 612-9922-7600
E-mail:
LRSAustralia@lrs.com