



“Since implementing an end-to-end backbone based on mySAP PLM for our product development, we have achieved a high degree of process integration and standardization in our IT landscape.”

Andreas Weber, Program Manager, BMW Group

AT A GLANCE

Summary

To maintain its pacesetter status in product innovation for premium automobiles, Munich-based BMW Group required superlative quality in its new product development process. It chose the mySAP™ Product Lifecycle Management (mySAP PLM) application to realize this objective.

Web Site

www.bmw.com

Key Challenges

- Increase data transparency and reliability
- Increase timeliness of processes
- Manage product variety efficiently and transparently

Project Objectives

- Redesign processes
- Implement product data management based on an end-to-end product structure
- Create a single, transparent data basis
- Optimize information flow

Solution and Services

mySAP PLM

Why SAP® Solution

- Future-proof solution offering a high degree of integration
- Functions available off the shelf

Implementation Highlights

- Common, uniform product structure
- Big-bang go-live for 12,000 users with a Web-based application

Key Benefits

- Transparent management of new product development
- Easier management of product complexity and variety
- Consistent and reliable data
- Greater reliability in planning

Implementation Partner

SAP® Consulting

Existing Environment

SAP software

Third-Party Integration

- Database: Oracle
- Hardware: HP
- Operating system: UNIX

BMW GROUP

End-to-End Data Consistency Ensures Faster Development Process

Whether it's a Rolls-Royce, a BMW 5 Series, or a MINI, buying a car nowadays is all about expressing individuality. To give its customers the widest possible range of products and options to choose from to best express that individuality, Munich-based BMW Group had to tackle data consistency in its new production process.

BMW's strategy focuses on innovation and product variety, yet this commitment has brought on the greatest development challenge in the company's history. The range of vehicles BMW offers is increasing. The complexity of the functions offered for those vehicles has burgeoned, posing a considerable challenge. Each model consists of thousands of individual components that can be combined in all manner of different ways. The quantity of data BMW has had to cope with as a result is immense.

“It is precisely this large number of variants and alternatives that creates enormous complexity at the data level in the development process,” explains Erich Henkel, project manager of phase 2 of the product data management (PDM) project. He is also responsible for implementing the IT structure at BMW. “We need new methods of dealing with this information if we are to use it efficiently to achieve our development goals in the design and production processes.”

The manufacturer of premium brand automobiles and motorcycles quickly realized that it needed a powerful IT solution that offered a high potential for integration if it was successfully going to implement and sustain its growth strategy today and in the future. “We don’t want our employees wasting valuable time chasing data. We want them to devote their time to development tasks,” explains Andreas Weber, program manager for the PDM project.

Growing Complexity Requires Transparency of Data in Development

In the past, BMW’s various development departments deployed a wide variety of specialist systems that proved difficult to integrate to form a single end-to-end process. But a single, integrated development environment was exactly what BMW was after. To achieve it, the company needed a technology that provided the basis for a transparent, end-to-end production development chain and that included comprehensive data access. BMW opted for the mySAP™ Product Lifecycle Management (mySAP PLM) application to meet this requirement.

Key factors in choosing the SAP® application were SAP’s strong market position and SAP’s ability to offer investment protection and future-proof products. Achieving end-to-end integration that included the processes and IT systems used in production – where SAP software is already in operation – was another key factor for BMW. And the functions available in mySAP PLM for product structure, configuration logic, change management, and commonality were of particular importance. “mySAP PLM allows us to exercise greater control over our product and system complexity,” explains Henkel. “This provides increased transparency over target and actual values in all phases of a vehicle design project, so we can plan with much greater reliability.”

Individual employees benefited from the SAP software in a number of ways. Not only did mySAP PLM promote collaboration between individual competence groups, but it also reduced the amount of administration work for everyone involved, because the time-consuming, error-prone process of manual data reconciliation had been eliminated.

Generic Product Structure Forms Basis for Process Steps

With its objectives clearly in mind, BMW worked with SAP Consulting to introduce mySAP PLM as part of its comprehensive change program within the new product development process. The project was divided into phases, the first focusing on integrated product data management.

A significant advantage was that BMW had a single product structure for all organizations, all phases, and all processes. That product structure formed the data basis for all process steps, with interfaces supplying essential information about vehicle types,

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Erich Henkel, Project Manager of Phase 2 of BMW’s PDM Project, BMW Group

product line, and components. As a result, this single, reliable source of data could be tapped to support efficient cooperation between all partners involved in the development process. Supported by the mySAP PLM application, the long-sought strategy was realized.

Of additional benefit were the reporting tools that can generate a wide range of views and overviews of the data. For example, one report displays the weights of individual vehicle parts right down to the last bolt. At a glance, it's possible to see whether a specific part meets the required specifications. The smallest development error can be spotted and rectified without delay.

Making Commonality Transparent

mySAP PLM provides BMW with the tools needed to control the complex commonality process: determining where in all the product lines individual parts and components are used. The efficient use of this information synchronizes and accelerates the development processes.

Leveraging Benefits

The functions implemented in phase 1 of the project have already proven their worth. Target values have been achieved. Following up on the initial phase without delay, BMW has implemented mySAP PLM for other development processes – integration of product specifications and change management, to name just two.

In the foreseeable future, BMW plans to replace more of its existing systems and build a uniform, end-to-end data set based on mySAP PLM. Weber envisions the benefits of the project clearly: “We have all recognized the potential of mySAP PLM, and it has enjoyed a high level of acceptance among employees.”

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