

SAP Customer Success Story

“Thanks to mySAP Product Lifecycle Management, our product development processes are now integrated and transparent, and our innovative products benefit from a faster time to market.”

Matthias Neubrand, Director, Technical IT Applications, B. Braun Aesculap



AT A GLANCE

Company Name

Aesculap
Germany
www.aesculap.de

Industry

Medical equipment
manufacturing

Key Challenges

- Develop faster and more transparent product development processes
- Integrate CAD data

Implementation Partners

- SAP® Consulting
- Cenit AG Systemhaus for CAD integration

Solution and Service

mySAP™ Product Lifecycle Management (with SAP Easy Document Management)

Existing Environment

SAP R/3®

Implementation Highlights

- Integrated product development, design, production, and logistics
- 120 users and 80 workstations

Key Benefits

- Transparent processes
- Uniform data

Hardware

IBM RS 6000

Operating System

IBM AIX

AESCULAP

A MEDICAL PRODUCT MANUFACTURER TURNS TO mySAP™ PRODUCT LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT TO INTEGRATE PRODUCT DATA AND CUT PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TIME

NURTURING IDEAS

For any business specializing in medical equipment, innovation is the key to success. Delivering the most technically advanced products is the only way to stay ahead of global competition.

To speed up its product development processes and improve transparency, medical equipment manufacturer Aesculap implemented mySAP™ Product Lifecycle Management (mySAP PLM). This traditional Swabian company is leveraging the solution to map both its development documentation and CAD data and to tightly integrate development, design, production, and logistics. In addition, the SAP® Easy Document Management application provides an intuitive user interface that facilitates access to documents and data.

A division of B. Braun Melsungen AG, Aesculap is one of the world's leading providers of medical equipment. Under the slogan “All it takes to operate,” the Tuttlingen, Germany-based company specializes in surgical instruments and devices, sutures, and orthopedic and surgical implants. Thirty percent of Aesculap's sales are generated by products that are less than five years old, which means that innovation and time to market play a pivotal role. New products must be developed, approved, and brought to market as quickly as possible.



As far as software is concerned, B. Braun has favored SAP solutions for many years. In fact, the pharmaceuticals group is one of SAP's oldest customers, with all SAP R/3® components represented across the group. Having run SAP R/3 since 1993, the Aesculap division has been gradually modeling its processes using SAP solutions in line with group strategy. At the beginning of 2002, Aesculap decided to deploy mySAP Product Lifecycle Management to support its product development work and to eliminate paper documentation.

BECOMING A DIGITAL ENTERPRISE

When asked what triggered the decision to implement mySAP PLM, project manager Matthias Neubrand, director of technical IT applications at B. Braun Aesculap, gives a pragmatic reply: "We wanted to reduce our office space, and the cupboards were taking up too much room." This sums up group chairman Ludwig Georg Braun's vision of the digital enterprise, which began to take shape in 2001. At that time, B. Braun was already using a digital archiving system in the back office. Next on the agenda was research and development. In keeping with B. Braun tradition, those in charge set high standards. "When we do something, we do it right. So we don't just archive completed documents; we map the entire process electronically," explains Neubrand.

Having resolved to implement a PLM solution, Aesculap evaluated the options available. It discovered that mySAP PLM functionality would perfectly support the company's activities. Because SAP products were the strategic preference of the company anyway, the choice of mySAP PLM was easy. The project team was also impressed by the cost benefits. "Because of its open design, mySAP PLM will always be more cost-effective than trying to manage this complex task using applications from several vendors," says Neubrand.

CENTRAL ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS AND OBJECTS

Since the implementation of mySAP PLM, Aesculap has benefited from digital product documentation and a uniform database. Once an idea for a product is approved, the R&D department launches a development project, which is assigned a number. A standardized project folder is then created in mySAP PLM. This file system comprises around 20 main folders, which are divided into sections containing templates and checklists that help steer the whole development process. When product development is complete, the product is approved with a click of the mouse. Any employee in the company with an SAP workstation and the relevant access rights can then view the product documentation. "At B. Braun, we aim to share knowledge and experience," says Neubrand, "and this is a reflection of that philosophy."

Access to mySAP PLM is provided via SAP Easy Document Management – an SAP user interface that is integrated into Microsoft Windows Explorer. This means that employees continue to work in a familiar environment, transferring documents into the active mySAP PLM form by dragging and dropping files. "Being intuitive to learn, SAP Easy Document Management was instrumental in ensuring mySAP PLM quickly gained acceptance among users," says Neubrand.

CAD INTEGRATION BRIDGES GAPS

Aesculap wasn't content just to model the development documentation electronically; it also wanted to incorporate CAD data in the solution to bridge gaps in integration. The company therefore linked mySAP PLM to its existing CAD solution, CATIA V5. Employees can now use the CAD desktop in mySAP PLM to access objects in the CAD system, like bills of material and 3D models and drawings. Users can also transfer changes in the development documentation to production documents more easily and vice versa.

The main benefit of this link, however, according to Neubrand, is that it narrows the gap between product development and production planning. Before, products were developed and passed over the wall to production planning for realization, he says. Now, the development process and production planning go hand in hand. Since the implementation of mySAP PLM, the project teams at Aesculap collaborate throughout the entire process using the same data model. Each team member can track the progress of the other departments. Everything is better coordinated, which is of particular benefit to the various external development contacts of Aesculap. These include hospital consultants, doctors, and professors, all of whom provide new ideas for products. It is not always easy to involve these contacts using paper-based processes.

DOVETAILING PRODUCTION AND LOGISTICS

mySAP PLM has also meant better integration between production and logistics. “In addition to clarifying the status of new development projects, the solution has made it easier for us to identify the effects of product changes,” says Neubrand. Because mySAP PLM and SAP R/3 are integrated, Aesculap can quickly determine how product innovations will affect production costs, how many obsolete parts are still in the warehouse, and whether any orders that should have been canceled are still ongoing.

“Because of its open design, mySAP PLM will always be more cost-effective than trying to manage this complex task using applications from several vendors.”

**Matthias Neubrand, Director, Technical IT Applications,
B. Braun Aesculap**

“This type of information would be lost if we were working with multiple, stand-alone systems,” says Neubrand. “We now have a uniform data model, and project team members are always kept up-to-date. But employees can also check a history to find out what was changed and when.” This better positions the company to cope with any crisis situations. “Let’s say a particular part has a design fault,” says Neubrand. “We need to find out quickly which orders are about to be processed, which are in the pipeline, which are in the warehouse, and which are on the way to the carrier.” Thanks to the integrated solution, together with its standardized base of documentation, Aesculap can now find the answers to all these questions.

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION WITH HELP FROM SAP CONSULTING

Aesculap completed much of the implementation project under its own steam. The project team comprised four IT experts, who were supported by users from the various departments. The project was completed in three phases. In the first phase, the project team migrated the development documentation for new products along with the legacy CAD data to the SAP solution. In the second, they linked the CAD solution to mySAP PLM and developed additional functionality, such as the synchronization of BOMs.

The third phase got under way at the beginning of 2004 and involves product change management – the documentation relating to the further development of existing products. In addition, the company trained around 150 development employees, who have access to 80 CAD workstations.

SAP Consulting was welcomed on board to assist with implementation and customizing. In addition to demonstrating in-depth knowledge of the product, the consultants possessed the necessary process expertise and followed a standardized project methodology. They were able to respond flexibly to customer requirements without losing sight of the schedule or budget. The direct link between the SAP consultants and SAP developers was particularly helpful. This meant that Aesculap could have its say in the development of the solution and suggest any changes.

Neubrand is wholly satisfied with the results of the project. After some initial reservations, the users soon recognized the benefits and are now pleased with the solution. It is currently only being used in Tuttlingen, which is where Aesculap carries out most of its development work. The next step, however, will be to integrate the development departments of other divisions within B. Braun. The goal is to achieve a uniform and efficient set of documentation that will be accessible to all divisions worldwide.