

SAP Customer Success Story

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Erich Zwahlen, Head of Business Controlling, PostFinance



PostFinance
SWISS POST

AT A GLANCE

Company Name
PostFinance, Switzerland
www.postfinance.ch

Industry
Financial services

Key Challenges
Streamline collection, aggregation, and reconciliation of data for sales forecasting and planning

Implementation Partners

- SAP® Consulting, a part of SAP Customer Services Network
- BearingPoint

Solution and Services
SAP Strategic Enterprise Management (SAP SEM®), an application found in mySAP™ ERP Financials

Existing Environment
SAP R/3®, now available in mySAP ERP

Implementation Highlight
Involved 160 users

Key Benefits

- Rapid, reliable collection and reconciliation of data
- One version of the truth
- Faster, more reliable access to mission-critical information
- More accurate, consistent data
- Process automation through workflow

Hardware
Compaq ProLiant ML570

Operating System
Microsoft Windows 2000 Advanced Server (with Oracle 8.1.7.4.1 database)

POSTFINANCE

SAP® STRATEGIC ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT (SAP SEM®) PROVIDES ENTERPRISE-WIDE INSIGHT INTO DEPARTMENTAL PLANNING

“We want to stay ahead of the pack by ensuring the right product is available to the right customer at the right time. With SAP Strategic Enterprise Management, we are well on the way to achieving this goal,” says Erich Zwahlen, head of business controlling at PostFinance, one of Switzerland’s leading financial service providers.

PostFinance offers one-stop financial services to citizens and organizations in the public and private sectors. As a key strategic business unit of state-owned Swiss Post, it enjoys unrivalled access to post-office customers at 2,650 branches throughout the country. In conjunction with a highly successful Web portal, telephone service center, and dedicated customer consulting centers, PostFinance’s 2,600 employees managed assets totaling almost CHF 43 billion (more than US\$34 billion) in 2003. Each year, 60% of all monetary transactions in Switzerland pass through PostFinance’s 2.6 million accounts.

WANTED: BETTER, FASTER SALES PLANNING

At PostFinance, forecasting the sales of its own and third-party products, from savings plans to investment funds, is a truly business-critical task: More than 80 product managers, market managers, and other employees are involved in compiling data on demand. The financial service provider uses the results to assign resources, highlight market trends, weed out or rectify weak products, and identify both under- and over-performing units and territories. However, despite its importance, the

existing process, based on Microsoft Excel, was far from ideal before the financial service provider implemented SAP® Strategic Enterprise Management (SAP SEM®), an application found in the mySAP™ ERP Financials solution. “Different employees ran their own spreadsheets with conflicting, often inaccurate data. We had no way of telling which figures were correct or most up-to-date.” There were frequent, long meetings, often with fruitless conclusions. Numbers were contradictory and had to be painstakingly checked and manually entered into new spreadsheets. Clearly, things had to change.

WHY SAP SEM?

PostFinance decided to implement the business planning and simulation capabilities of the SAP SEM application. This provided a complete answer to the financial service provider’s needs, combining powerful functionality and openness with scalability. The alternatives did not offer the same degree of support for synchronizing and reconciling data, or for automated workflow. What’s more, Swiss Post had established SAP as the group’s strategic IT platform, creating the basis for seamless integration with SAP SEM. Moreover, PostFinance already had proven SAP skills.

RAPID IMPLEMENTATION – STRONG PARTNERS

The financial service provider kicked off the SAP SEM project under the leadership of PostFinance’s business controlling department. Initially, SAP global partner BearingPoint came on board to help with the implementation. But, as the solution was still relatively new, the financial service provider called in SAP Consulting experts from Switzerland to provide additional project expertise. In fact, they applied the experience gained from the successful introduction of SAP SEM at Banque Pictet and Standard Bank of South Africa.

Three months after the kick-off, the project team completed the high-level design phase, and within six months, by October, the consultants had fully customized the software according to PostFinance’s requirements. By December, training had taken place, and organizational issues had been resolved, ensuring it was ready for go-live in the first month of the new year. “The know-how and project experience of the SAP consultants were key factors in making the project such a success,” adds Zwahlen.

ONE VERSION OF THE TRUTH/STREAMLINED PLANNING

According to Zwahlen, the benefits were immediate and significant: “All 160 users now have one version of the truth, minimizing errors and duplication of effort. And the quality of planning data is excellent – we have seen a marked improvement in accuracy.”

SAP SEM enabled the financial service provider to streamline planning and forecasting – well beyond its expectations – increasing reliability, efficiency, and transparency. “On the basis of its new automatic, highly detailed reports, PostFinance is already recognizing and meeting demand better than before,” says Zwahlen. “Moreover, the whole process is driven by SAP SEM’s workflow functionality, which has added a new dimension to sales planning.”

Users have access to exactly the figures they need, while the software automatically reminds them to enter data or approve other people’s input. This guarantees much faster and more effective synchronization across product groups and market segments. By logging into the central system to enter or view products and sales details, product and market managers can see what their colleagues are doing. “By encouraging collaboration in this way, we ensure products are targeted at the segments where they are needed,” says Zwahlen.

READY FOR THE FUTURE

But, PostFinance is not going to rest on its laurels. It knows that it can squeeze even more value out of SAP SEM. For example, it plans to implement the software’s simulation functionality so it can anticipate both risks and opportunities more effectively, and optimize deployment of resources. The company is also looking to roll out the SAP Balanced Scorecard for at-a-glance monitoring of business performance.

Thanks to SAP SEM, product and sales planning at PostFinance is now more precise and timely than ever before – which is excellent news for both the financial service provider and its customers.