success story: AptarGroup

"We are an international Group in need of part-ners who can efficiently operate and support us around the world. For the SAP Global Data Center project, which from a technical and logistical viewpoint was highly complex and of great strategic importance to us, we turned to REALTECH for their invaluable help. REAL-TECH turned out to be the ideal partner not only because of their wide technical expertise, but also in terms of the project's management and direction."

Antonio D'Alessandro, IS Director, AptarGroup

AptarGroup has chosen REALTECH forSAP Global Data Center project

AptarGroup decided to make the Chicago headquar-ters the centralized hub for software and hardware and the administration center for IT base services for the Group's entire SAP environment. This required the migration of multiple systems from different locations and platforms to a unified environment in the Chicago data center. These activities, which involved the French, Italian, German and American offices, have led to a single, service-oriented informa-tion center enabling a reduction in management and maintenance costs and an optimization of internal and external services. To maximize success and mi-nimize risk, AptarGroup engaged REALTECH to work with its own skilled IT team. REALTECH developed a comprehensive project plan that included technology consulting services and the application of proprietary software solutions.

Project

To reduce management and maintenance costs and improve the level of services both internally and externally, AptarGroup launched an international project to set up a new centralized, service-oriented organization dedicated to information systems: the SAP Global Data Center (SAP GDC). Under the project, the hardware, software and supply of all base services needed for the use of SAP R/3 and other SAP technology components and solutions were centralized in the Group's Chicago headquarters.

Nevertheless, it was not just a matter of getting the Global Data Center up and running, but also of consolidating all procedures and plans needed to ensure the high availability of the systems, high level of service, security and performance controls, system support and management, internal hosting of the systems, emergency plans and a disaster recovery solution.

Thanks to its strong technical expertise and experience in the SAP field, REALTECH, chosen by AptarGroup as its partner in the venture, develo-ped and proposed a solution which enabled AptarGroup to fulfill all the objectives that had been set, and managed the project in such a way as to meet all expectations as far as quality of service, timeliness and budget were concerned.

theGuard!

The new organization has meant that AptarGroup has been able to reduce ownership costs, improve business processes and offer better services to internal users and customers. Included among the key performance indicators (KPIs) set by AptarGroup to evaluate the new structure were the systems reliability and response levels and the level of services supplied to the Group's various divisions.

The project began in January 2003 and saw a number of successive go-lives for the different Group's divisions: the first went live on July 14, 2003, the last on November 11 of the same year. In particular, the project involved subsidiaries and divisions from France, Germany, Italy and the United States.

The project was carried out by an international team consisting of six REALTECH consultants from the Italian, German, Spanish and American subsidiaries. Eight AptarGroup personnel took part in the project of whom five were employed full-time while the other three were part-time. It was therefore a highly complex project, not only from a technical standpoint but also on an organizational and logistical level.

Rigorous project management was key to the success of the project. It enabled the team to plan and execute activities in a very efficient manner and make optimal use of the project's resources. A good example of just how well this worked was the systems' idle time. The systems were idle for no more than 30 hours, the time it took to port some of the production instances from Europe to the United States (database export, travel from Europe to the United States, database import). Solely for the Italian subsidiary, during the 30 hours, as

many as 3 different production instances for 3 different systems (SAP R/3, SAP BW and SAP APO) were moved simultaneously.

REALTECH was responsible for all of the technical aspects of the project. Their activities consisted of developing and executing the project plan, coordinating all of the resources involved, providing technology consulting services, and implementing proprietary software solutions. Consulting services were provided both on-site and remotely. The REALTECH software solutions theGuard! enables AptarGroup to monitor and manage the new organization more efficiently.

Technical Project Work Packages

Following the feasibility study conducted by IBM, the consolidation of the Global Data Center was carried out by REALTECH who undertook the initial monitoring of performance, assessment of the WAN network, the bandwidth sizing, the start of a pilot project and activities related to SAP migration. Among these: 20 code page conversions (from EBCDIC to ASCII) for all SAP R/3 systems operating on IBM iSeries AS/400, 5 OS/DB migrations (from UNIX/Informix to iSeries DB2/400 in ASCII) for SAP R/3 systems, 5 OS/DB migrations (from Linux/SAP DB to Microsoft Windows 2000/Microsoft SQL Server 2000) for SAP BW and SAP Web AS systems. System copies were also carried out for 2 SAP BW, 2 SAP Web AS and 2 SAP APO (on Microsoft Windows 2000/Microsoft SQL Server 2000).

The project, therefore, presented considerable technical complexities. During the process, more than 4 terabytes of data were trans-

ferred. In addition to the above, REALTECH defined the Service Level Agreements and all the reports this entailed, defined and implemented the support procedures, defined the SAP Administration and Operation procedures and processed all the documentation involved.

Furthermore, REALTECH developed, implemented and tested a disaster recovery solution, provided support during the go-live stages and undertook network and performance analysis in the stages following the go-lives. Even the hand over of the technical competencies from the REALTECH consultants to AptarGroup constituted a project objective in itself. Seven months from the last go-live, SAP operational and management costs are less than those that AptarGroup sustained in 2002, despite the fact that, in the interim, a further 400 users and three additional sites have been activated.

Future initiatives

Happy with the work carried out by REALTECH, Antonio D'Alessandro stated: *"We are certain that the relationship we have developed with REALTECH will allow us to plan, follow and control the evolution of the architecture of our information systems. Together with REALTECH, we would also like to define procedures that will enable us to conduct quality checks on our architecture precisely so that we can improve it on an ongoing basis. At this time, we would like to look into the possible uses of SAP Enterprise Portal to improve communications between the SAP Global Data Center and the divisions. For a project of this magnitude, REALTECH's experience and know-how would be invaluable to us."*

AptarGroup is a world-leader in the dispensing and distribution systems industry – a niche area in the packaging field – and supplies large companies operating in the personal care, fragrance and cosmetics, pharmaceutical, household and food/beverage markets.

AptarGroup has over 6,000 employees in 19 countries across the globe and is quoted on the New York Stock Exchange as ATR.

Images: Aptargroup