"We rely on REALTECH as a recognized expert in SAP architecture consulting. Working with them, we were able to future proof our pan-European SAP landscape and to reduce our SAP operational costs by up to 40 percent following a successful migration project."

Roland Hanewinkel, head of the SAP Basis group, Generali Deutschland Informatik Services

Effectively reducing IT costs with SAP experts

The international Generali Group has renowned insurance companies, financial service providers, and health insurers under its umbrella. Generali Deutschland Informatik Services (GDIS), the IT service provider for the Generali Group, is in charge of continuously developing the company's core applications. The IT experts at GDIS are running a large and powerful SAP environment: Generali employees in Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, and in twelve southern and eastern European countries rely on their SAP applications. Given the very high importance of the SAP systems, the underlying infrastructure is constantly reviewed for its profitability and ability to meet future demands.

Eventually, the possibility of migrating the SAP systems to a new platform was brought under consideration. The Linux operating system along with more cost-efficient hardware were promising to make their operation more budget-friendly, while providing increased independence from hardware vendors. Generali turned to the technology experts at REALTECH for its architecture consulting needs and asked them to conduct a feasibility study and a proof of concept. REALTECH was able to demonstrate how to safely execute such a migration project and how it could achieve significant savings.

REALTECH excels in both theory and practice

With its many years of experience and more than 900 migration projects in production environments, REALTECH was the perfect partner to perform a feasibility study and a proof of concept to evaluate the benefits of migrating the SAP systems. Another goal was to identify any potential technological risks of the project and to calculate its economic value. The study was also expected to present a practical approach to achieving the project's objectives.

REALTECH delivered a detailed analysis that prompted Generali to decide in favor of modernizing its SAP infrastructure. The IT professionals were about to take on the largest SAP migration project ever to be undertaken in Europe. Some 100 servers and databases, 24 system lines for 14 countries, and a total of 100 terabytes of data were to be transferred to the new target platforms.

"We were able to experience the expertise of REALTECH's consultants first-hand during the RFP stage and then decided to pay a visit to Munich Re, a reference customer who had completed a similar project," says Roland Hanewinkel, head of the SAP Basis group at GDIS. *"A joint visit to SAP's LinuxLab further supported our decision to bring in the REALTECH experts as strategic advisors with the necessary implementation skills,"* Mr. Hanewinkel goes on to explain.

REALTECH

Shaping the future with REALTECH

Generali Deutschland Informatik Services (GDIS) had a very clear idea of the task at hand: It wanted its SAP infrastructure to be brought up to speed with the latest technologies. At the same time, it wanted to reduce its dependency on individual hardware vendors to future proof its investment. After all, the Generali Group relies on its SAP systems to power the business processes of insurance companies and financial service providers in 14 countries.

"When we first started considering this, we quickly realized that outsourcing our SAP systems would not deliver tangible bottom-line benefits for us," Roland Hanewinkel points out. *"We then analyzed the idea of migrating our entire SAP infrastructure to Linux with x86-based hardware,"* he goes on. Generali decided to hire an external service provider to determine the framework for the migration.

Generali drafted a detailed request for proposal for architecture and strategy consulting services, talked to reference customers, and visited the SAP LinuxLab before deciding in favor of REALTECH. The companies held joint workshops with experts from both sides to specify initial technological details for the target platform and set a roadmap for the migration project. A risk matrix was to provide full visibility into any IT market developments that could potentially harm the ability of the chosen solution to stand the test of time and into the risks that could arise from the migration project.

REALTECH's analysis of the SAP system landscape included the identification and the logical and functional grouping of the affected servers and SAP components, the standardization and assessment of current system performance and future performance requirements, the transferability of crucial interfaces including system management, and a detailed cost estimate. On top of that, REALTECH also highlighted the organizational, economic, and technical implications of the migration project.

"Despite all the theoretical considerations, it was very important to us to see how the migration would look like in a real-life setting and to know that the chosen target platform would live up to our performance expectations. That is why REALTECH conducted a proof of concept with three large and demanding SAP systems," says Mr. Hanewinkel in describing the next step.

Proof of concept creates clarity

The trial run provided valuable insights that were instrumental in planning the system architecture.

Based on these thorough preparations, the migration was carried out successfully and two months ahead of schedule. The project team successfully migrated the existing Power6/AIX servers with Oracle databases to Red Hat Linux x86 systems with DB2 databases and virtualized the SAP infrastructure with VMware.

"The SAP architecture consulting services delivered by REALTECH's experts were crucial in allowing us to future proof our SAP landscape and making it more economically viable," Roland Hanewinkel concludes. He has one more important insight from the project to add: *"The proof of concept was essential to the success of the project and gave us the confidence of knowing that we had chosen the right IT strategy."*

With a premium income of €17.2 billion and more than 13.5 million customers, the Generali Deutschland Group is the second largest primary insurance group in the German market.
The Generali Deutschland Group includes companies such as Generali Versicherungen, AachenMünchener, CosmosDirekt, Central Krankenversicherung, Advocard Rechtsschutzversicherung, Deutsche Bausparkasse Badenia and Dialog as well as the group-owned service providers.

Images: Generali

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