HOW HANA – AND CTAC – HELP SOUDAL FUTURE-PROOF ITS BUSINESS

The Soudal group is a global market leader in sealants, PU foams and adhesives. The key to its decades of success? Innovation has been its lifeblood for over 50 years and in today's rapidly changing world, R&D is more important than ever. When it comes to IT, SAP has been Soudal's vehicle for innovation since 2013. In order to keep running its business simpler, smarter and more reliably, Soudal swapped its existing database for a HANA database, with the help of Ctac.

Venture, Act and Persevere

Dream, Reflect, Venture, Act and Persevere: it has been the motto of Vic Swerts, Soudal's founder and chairman since 1966. The company also strives to follow these inspirational words in the field of IT. "We're always looking for ways to work smarter and keep up to speed with new technologies. That's our philosophy," says Danny Verstraelen, CIO at Soudal. Since 2013, Soudal has been rolling out SAP's ERP platform at its 60+ branches across the world. "The SAP Business Suite is streamlining operations in 25 Soudal branches now. The objective is to have all 64 branches running SAP by 2025." 2025 is also the date when SAP will stop providing maintenance and support for its existing SAP Business Suite. In 2017, Soudal started preparing for that switch: by replacing its database with the HANA database, it lays the foundations for a smooth transition to SAP S/4 HANA.

Higher performance to support growth

"Soudal is growing and expanding, which implies that we have to deal with a soaring number of systems,

applications and data in more and more locations, with more and more users," Danny explains. "Moreover, real-time data – and, more importantly, the power to quickly process and analyze it – is gaining increasing importance at Soudal; it's simply a must to make the decisions needed to thrive and survive in today's competitive, digital marketplace. Capturing, processing and analyzing data quickly requires a powerful platform. We feared that our existing database would not be up to the job for much longer."

High availability and disaster recovery

More than that, Danny and his team understood they needed a really reliable database solution that would guarantee 100% uptime. "SAP is crucial for our business operations. Downtime would mean we can no longer deliver or produce goods – a disaster. So, we cannot afford to take any risk when it comes to system availability. When SAP proposed replacing our database with SAP HANA to speed up and protect our business processes, we decided to take the plunge."

Long-term, trusted partner

Database migration is not something undertaken lightly and Danny understood that Soudal didn't have the in-house resources to manage the project. The team called in the help of Ctac, its long-term SAP implementation partner. "We've always been very satisfied with our collaboration with Ctac. They know what they're talking about when it comes to technology and, at the same time, they know our business from the inside out – which makes them the ideal partner to think along with both business and IT. In addition, we're really on the same wavelength. They have a down-to-earth, customer-oriented approach, which I love." To ensure a smooth transition to the HANA database, Ctac put a proven project methodology on the table. The phased approach helped ensure a hiccup-free go-live, right on time.

A new milestone in speed

Did the new database bring the benefits that Soudal expected? Danny Verstraelen responds affirmatively. As the HANA database keeps all the data stored in the memory and does not have to load everything from the server first, it ensures truly high-performance data processing. "Access to data is indeed much faster,"

Danny confirms. "That helps us to work much more efficiently. Our accounting and sales teams, for example, say they now retrieve invoice details, outstanding orders or sales orders three times faster than in the past. In addition, SAP HANA gives us absolute peace of mind: in the case of an incident or system failure, the standby system takes over, thus ensuring 24/7 uptime."

Solid foundations

While migrating to the SAP HANA database, Ctac also upgraded Soudal's SAP Business Suite ECC6.0 to Enhancement Pack 7. "The migration to the HANA database and the update allowed us to easily activate a series of new functions for accounting, controlling, logistics, etc. That, too, has helped us to boost efficiency."

"All in all, we're very satisfied, both about the new platform and the collaboration with Ctac. We've extended our partnership with Ctac for an undetermined period. With Ctac as our IT implementation partner and the HANA database in place, we have the solid foundations we need to sustain our growth," Danny concludes.