

Everything in its right place: Efficient appointment booking and resource planning



Coordinating field staff is a challenge that can be mastered only by efficient and flexible planning. Having the right software in place can simplify the planning process, save costs and materials, and reduce unnecessary stress. By introducing ClickSoftware's ClickSchedule solution, German energy provider Badenova, has optimized its resource planning and centralized its work order management process. An SAP R/3 adapter connects the mobile solution directly to the company's backend SAP system.

When Badenova was formed from the merger of six local energy providers, the company raised expectations for a more effective and efficient organization of the company's business processes and, as a result, the expectation for increased rates of return. The unbundling forced by the network agency required greater competitiveness from providers.

More efficient processes in the technical area

The important technical area was crucial for reaching the objective of optimizing business processes in services and plant maintenance. This is an important issue, since 50,000 jobs are handled by 360 engineers every year.

The first step towards the new "control concept" was the complete reorganization of the internal coordination and scheduling department. As part of this process, ClickSchedule was integrated into the existing SAP system.

Badenova chose the ClickSchedule workforce management solution on the advice of Kienbaum, management consultants who worked together with Badenova employees on the organizational aspects of the project. The decisive features were the extensive functionality of the ClickSchedule solution as well as integration into the SAP system. Compared with other solutions, ClickSchedule reached the highest levels of functionality as demanded in the requirements specification.

A workforce management system is particularly useful for companies with a large number of technicians responsible for work in areas such as assembly, plant maintenance and meter reading. Significant savings can also be made when the work is of a repetitive nature.

Controlling the order placement

The core of the solution, which was implemented in collaboration with the Berlin based Wessendorf Software & Consulting, is better and more accurate job planning.

For, alongside regular plant maintenance tasks which are comparatively easy to plan, the arrangement of the planning process was complicated by jobs coming in at short notice, e.g. sudden breakdowns. Due to the fact that the technicians need certain skills corresponding to the job they have to perform, such as special welding qualifications, or further safety training for working with high voltages, the skills of



more than 200 technicians were entered into the system. This information is available at any time to everyone in charge of process planning. Although the system offers fully automated planning, process planning during the first stage of the project continued to be handled manually using ClickSchedule. This enabled staff to quickly and easily gain experience in using the solution, and employees responsible for process planning could get accustomed to the tool.



Only at the second stage of the project, at the beginning of 2006, was the solution automated step-by-step. This careful approach significantly raised acceptance of the solution. It was important to explain to employees from the start that the software is only a supporting tool, and that they will continue to control the processes.

Technicians have been given mobile computers directly connected to the SAP system via a mobile SAP interface (MAU). Thus, they are able to arrange the tools and materials needed for a job the day before they are due to commence work. This kind of mobile connectivity enables short term job handling and planning and can be adapted to accommodate people and time schedules. The ability to transfer data concerning a finished job directly back to the SAP system produces a significant enhancement in business processes. The lack of different media and the unmodified transmission of data from the technicians on-site minimizes errors which normally occur when filling in paper documents (e.g. the information is not legible, loss of formulas, postponement of annoying paper work).

The whole project, from the formulation of the requirement specification to realization, testing and roll out, took just a year. The official start occurred when ClickSchedule went into operation in December 2004. In the middle of the previous year an optimized user interface was introduced to handle order registration. Since November 2005, technicians have been connected via mobile computers. At the beginning of 2006 the manual dispatching process of the first stage was semi-automated. Switching to a fully automated solution in the spring of 2006 completed the project.

Considering the complexity of the processes that had to be registered and adapted in the run up to the project, the timeframe for completion was very narrow. In the Wessendorf company an expert project partner had been found, not only with regard to ClickSchedule but, moreover, as a long-term SAP partner with a lot of know-how concerning the processes to be mapped and the mobile connection via SAP-MAU.

A large potential for optimization has been created

A comprehensive reporting system was also set up as part of the project. A control cockpit was established so that employees can receive information on the progress of a maintenance or investment job or on the level of staff efficiency and compliance to deadlines.

Performance figures and objectives were agreed upon with the employees and provide managers with a basis for active control of their divisions. As a result, the efficiency of the field staff has been significantly enhanced. There is also faster processing of data due to the direct connection to the SAP system. The quality of data has also increased considerably.

Internal and external benchmarking was installed, involving all employees active in the process of continuous improvement. Overall, the interaction of all these components contributes considerably to securing economic success and employees' jobs at Badenova.

The Importance of Change Management

One last point that is important to note is that employees should be involved from the start of the planning process in order to increase the motivation for change and to achieve the necessary acceptance of the solution. Due to the fact that the introduction of a workforce management system leads to a change in company structure, you need to talk with employees and their representatives right from the beginning about the necessity and advantages of the system. Otherwise, workers might reject changes that fall under their scope of work. Furthermore, due to the change of the company structure it is imperative that the company management is committed to the project.

About Badenova

The Badenova company provides heating, electricity and water for the area of Südbaden in Southern Germany (the Black Forest region). It has to guarantee the daily supply for more than 600,000 gas customers and more than 260,000 electricity and water consumers. Badenova, which formed from the merger of six local energy providers in 2001, employs over 1,000 people and has a natural gas network that spans over 7,000 km.

About ClickSoftware

ClickSoftware is the leading provider of workforce and service optimisation solutions that maximise workforce productivity and customer satisfaction while minimising operation costs.

ClickSoftware customers represent a cross-section of industry leaders in the telecommunications, computer and office equipment, industrial equipment, medical equipment, building automation, utilities, and home service sectors.

About Wessendorf Software & Consulting

Wessendorf Software & Consulting, founded in 1997, is a specialist for SAP solutions in the field of service and maintenance. As an SAP software development partner, the software and consulting company combines a rich SAP know-how with substantial experience in the efficient configuration of business processes. Companies like ABB, Bosch, EON, KonicaMinolta, Siemens, Dortmund Public Services and Velux are among its customers.

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