GateHouse increases efficiency with IFS

GateHouse, one of Denmark's leading suppliers of software for satellite communications and maritimen use, has launched a complete ERP platform from IFS, implemented by IFS Gold Channel Partner Curit.

The firm chose a standard solution, without a single adaptation, to support its complex product and project environment, resulting in a record-breaking implementation period of just one month and quick agility gains.

At first glance, it might be seen as overkill for a business to choose a complete ERP system in the Maersk league. But it makes complete business sense if you're a critical supplier to some of the world's largest satellite operators, you're structured in several companies that consistently purchase resources from each other, and you have ambitious growth plans.

GateHouse is an exceptionally dynamic firm that needs to move resources and change direction with great agility. In addition to its core business built around two companies, GateHouse Telecom and GateHouse Maritime, the firm recently established GateHouse Igniter to develop new businesses. This places high demands on managers, who must maintain their accurate business overview to successfully perform central management functions, and not least on the firm's ERP platform, which must be able to adapt to entirely new ways of working as needs arise.

Goodbye to the old ERP solution

Implementation of GateHouse's two-year-old existing ERP system from a major ERP supplier had advanced no further than the finance department, where just a handful of employees used it. Everything else in the business ran in separate systems. GateHouse asked the incumbent ERP vendor how they could expand the solution into a complete platform but was told that this would require major customizations. GateHouse declined.

The partnership

Curit is an IFS Gold Channel Partner that covers the complete IFS life cycle from implementation, customizations and integrations to upgrade and all the support tasks in between and has been doing so since 2003. Their customers are typically project centered, or have specific high level needs like process or engineer to order manufacturing. They have customers ranging from simple, single site installation and up to over 1200 users with global presence using multiple sites and companies. Curit was awarded 1st on Computerwold. dk TOP100 ERP Companies in Denmark in 2020 and 2018.

www.curit.dk

"We didn't want a system that had to be coded and adapted to suit us," says GateHouse CFO Kenney Vesteraa Christiansen. "That would be too complicated and very expensive. We plan to grow, to hire more employees, and to start new businesses, so we need to reduce business complexity, not increase it. There was only one vendor that could deliver what we were looking for, and that was IFS."

Christiansen is a big fan of IFS's system philosophy. "The entire IFS platform consists of modules. If you need a new module, you simply open the door. You don't need to write a lot of code. This is really valuable to a company like ours."

From start to finish in one month

GateHouse chose IFS ERP to bring all three of their operating companies and their holding company together on the same, standard platform. The private cloud-based system, which all employees now use, includes a full range of ERP functions from finance to project management, fixed assets, CRM, customer orders, time registration and HR. Employees have mobile access as well as personal interfaces, adapted to their responsibilities, through IFS Lobby.

"Although we are a complex product and project company," explains Christiansen, "we fought hard for a standard solution. Leading Danish companies in the aerospace and defense industries with complex businesses use IFS, and we just had to conclude that the solution provides a better real-time overview of the business, resource management, cost control, etc. These things are not standard in other systems."

Month-end closings now significantly faster

Choosing a standard solution resulted in an extremely fast implementation phase of just one month and meant that GateHouse could begin to reap the rewards of the investment very quickly.

"We've only been live for a month and a half," reminds Christiansen. "Usually, companies are drowning at this point but we're already up and running just fine. We've reduced the time it takes to do month-end closings by 50 percent, and we'll cut another 30 percent next month."

About Gatehouse

GateHouse consists of three main companies:

- GateHouse Telecom develops software for some of the world's largest satellite operators. GateHouse software is the lifeblood of satellite terminals and establishes the entire connection between satellites and receivers. The software is included in half of Inmarsat's 120,000 terminals for secure communications in the maritime sector, in aviation, and on land.

- GateHouse Maritime develops Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) based solutions for maritime authorities, ports, coast guards, etc. The software is used to manage maritime navigation, track ships, and optimize operational planning in ports.

- GateHouse Igniter is a development company that utilizes the competencies of Telecom and Maritime to develop new business.

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GateHouse

"In the past, we had to close the month in several phases because data was not available. It was very time-consuming. With IFS, I have the entire firm's financial data in my Finance Lobby and can manage the complete month-end closing in one screen. We have gone from 25 spreadsheets with 15 tabs each to an integrated reporting tool that draws on master data from IFS. Everything is generated automatically and uses IFS's built-in Robotic Process Automation (RPA) events. We've taken a giant step forward."

Unparalleled internal settlement capabilities

Many others in the organization are also delighted with the choice of IFS. No one misses hand carrying processes between siloed systems or spending vast amounts of time on getting an overview of projects. Project managers can now always see the current status of their projects and project finances. No one has to wait to get the numbers they need. Everything is live.

"It's a huge benefit to operations," says Thomas Jensen, Senior Vice President of GateHouse Telecom. "We're organized around projects and revenue streams. We lend and sell resources to each other across projects and companies, which requires very effective management tools. IFS gives us these tools."

"IFS is extremely good at multi-company reporting," continues Jensen. "Previously, we could spend half a day on internal settlements—to everyone's great annoyance. When you're busy, that felt like a huge waste of time. Now, it happens automatically, and we like it. Once resource loans are established, it's business as usual. Employees simply have to register their time, then IFS allocates and posts time consumption in the right places. It makes it much easier to use our resources optimally, and we get full transparency throughout."

Few companies are unique

Curit, an IFS partner, managed the GateHouse implementation. While Curit is known to be efficient, completing the entire ERP implementation in just one month is still a record.

"This is the fastest project we've ever completed," says Peter Eskelund Bering, Curit's project manager for the implementation. "The entire process took place during the COVID-19 lockdown, which restricted our physical presence. Everything was therefore done remotely, with just one employee on-site for five days when we went live."

"Many companies think they're unique and that they need an ERP system tailored to their needs. Our experience is that most folks get better value from a standard solution. I hope others will learn from the GateHouse case. Standard solutions provide faster and smoother implementation, and they're cheaper. It can be done for a tenth of the price since it's the consultancy hours that are expensive," explains Bering.

We plan to grow, hire more employees, and start new ventures, so we need to reduce complexity across the business. we're busy.` IFS gives us astrong tool to reach our goals.

Kenney Vesteraa Christiansen, Gatehouse CFO

Find out more

Further information, e-mail info@ifs.com, contact your local IFS office or visit our web site, ifs.com