Precision engineering company halstrup-walcher goes live with IFS Cloud in less than 12 months

Since January 2022, halstrup-walcher has been using IFS Cloud to support its demanding engineering production schedule. The implementation project, led by IFS Gold partner bytics AG, unites previously disparate systems and was completed in under a year with no previous instance of IFS.

Established in 1946, and owned by the Walcher family since 1990, today halstrup-walcher provides precision drive and sensor technology. The company specializes in two areas of design and manufacture: engineering positioning systems and mechatronic drive solutions for automated format adjustments in production machinery; and providing highly sensitive differential air pressure measurement technology for cleanroom, HVAC and OEM applications.

The company's previous ERP system, AP+ software by Asseco, was at end of life due to its reliance on the retired internet explorer. Explains Thomas Hoch, Head of Quality Management and Solution Architect for the IFS Cloud project at halstrup-walcher, "We knew we had to act so we spent the latter part of 2021 reviewing our solution options, narrowing our final choice to two vendors. We liked the fact that IFS Cloud offered extensive embedded functionality across our key operational areas and would let us control when to deploy service updates and new versions. The final deciding factor was the experience and confidence shown by IFS systems integrator and implementation partner bytics AG. We put a great emphasis on working with the right partners, both on customer side, and when it comes to service partners."

About halstrup-walcher

halstrup-walcher is a German engineering company manufacturing mechatronic drives, and high precision pressure measurement technology for cleanroom, HVAC and OEM applications.

A division of engineering group Walcher Meßtechnik GmbH based in Kirchzarten, the company has 180 employees and trades in 49 countries.

Unified, fully integrated solution

The opportunity to replace several disparate software packages with one unified IFS Cloud solution was particularly appealing. "We were using different point solutions for finance, quality assurance and HR," says Hoch. "IFS Cloud would provide us a fully integrated solution using accurate, real-time master data."

Functionality adopted within the IFS Cloud implementation includes finance, sales, production, product data management, quality assurance, document management, HR and tools for service, maintenance and project management. A key benefit has been the ability to quickly configure new products from previous specifications using the Configure To Order tool.

Whilst it is still too early to quantify specific performance improvements with metrics, Hoch is clear the biggest impact has been the ability to access all business data transparently within one system. Explains Hoch, "For example, all information about quality assurance and purchased products are in the same system. If we have a problem in production with one part, the team leader can instantly check the results of the initial quality inspection to decide if it is a problem with the part itself or the mounting process. As we aim for the highest quality standards, this enables us to quickly analyze and evaluate potential problems and continuously optimize our processes."

The company has also streamlined and accelerated the approval of incoming supplier invoices using the embedded automated OCR document management capabilities.

Having access to machine data in the system will be valuable to optimize production. "We are milling shafts and pinions in-house so maximizing uptime is important. We are now planning to develop an interface to map the performance and status of every machine. Another next step is to reach a paperless production process. The system provides the required functions. The main challenge is to convince and train the colleagues to work without paper. In our lean management system, a next step is to avoid waste," says Hoch.

The importance of reports across the business sees a dedicated in-house programmer making full use of IFS lobbies to create custom data views and insights in the user interface. The company also designs, configures and uses its own customized IFS lobbies to analyze and share Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data across the management team.

About bytics AG

bytics is a future-oriented solution partner for company-wide digitized business processes to strengthen the market position of manufacturing companies with the potential for servitization.

As an IFS Gold Partner, bytics is pursuing the mission of bringing flexibility, performance and transparency into the management of all business processes in order to ensure that customers remain successful and efficient in the future.

Bespoke formats and interfaces, zero modifications

Whilst the configuration capabilities within IFS Cloud have allowed the team to create some 100 bespoke buttons and events, and seven interfaces to other systems, the core IFS Cloud code remains completely standard. All the required business functionality has been achieved with zero code modifications, ensuring any service updates can be applied whenever desired to keep the system software up to date (evergreen).

"It was important to us to be able to choose which updates to take and when to apply them. We work closely with our systems integrator bytics to decide when to deploy updates and new releases to maximize the latest functionality and fixes," explains Hoch.

The implementation was achieved against a challenging business backdrop. Marco Ferrari, Project Manager at bytics AG, the IFS implementation partner, explains. "We were in the middle of the pandemic with lockdowns, and at the same time the customer was under pressure dealing with a 20% growth in revenue. halstrup-walcher has a very open communication culture, which definitely helped us immensely. Despite the need to work remotely, the project was successfully delivered in under a year. The first project meeting convened on Jan 4, 2021, and on Jan 3, 2022, the system went live."

With IFS Cloud now successfully implemented across all areas of the business, bytics' next project will be to further optimize the given processes, enhance the reporting capabilities and to introduce additional modules like the use of mobile devices in the stock system by the end of 2022.

We have all the business functionality we need, including multiple interfaces and bespoke lobbies and reports, with zero modifications to core code. It's a business wide, cutting edge evergreen ERP solution that will support our future global growth.

Thomas Hoch, Head of Quality Management
& Solution Architect, HALSTRUP-WALCHER

BENEFITS SEEN USING IFS CLOUD

- Unified, fully integrated solution

- Single, real-time version of the truth

- Configure to Order tool

- Automated invoice processing

- Demand Driven Material Resourcing

- Standard build with zero modifications to core code

- Bespoke reports, IFS lobbies and events using in-house configuration

- Full control over deployment of latest service updates and version releases

Implementation advice

What advice would Hoch offer other companies considering an IFS Cloud implementation? "Firstly, be brave. It's very complex trying to run an old and new system in parallel. Whilst it sounds daunting, I believe the 'Big Bang' approach – switch off the old and turn on the new – is far cleaner and better, especially if you have a good implementation partner. Also make sure you give the project enough resources. Our internal IT team is four people, and we also had 13 key users representing all areas of the business contributing. Good communication is also important, especially when everyone is working right at their limit. bytics were particularly good at keeping everyone focused on the big issues every day to ensure on-time delivery. Basically, keep calm, and talk, talk, talk."

Moment of Service™

Hoch sees a direct link between IFS Cloud functionality and the company's service delivery. "Our Moment of Service sounds simple: to deliver products on time and error free. But there are many complications that can jeopardize this goal. At the moment, for example, we face major global supply chain challenges. One of the new capabilities in IFS Cloud is Demand Driven Material Requirements Planning (DDMRP) and we believe this will have a major positive impact on guaranteeing accurate delivery dates for our customers."

Find out more

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