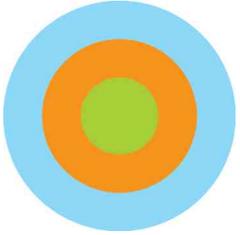




Solid management information
creates stability for Endemol

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The Endemol Group, with over 80 subsidiaries in 31 countries, was looking for stability in its financial information systems. The implementation and subsequent outsourcing of hosting and support of SAP Business Planning and Consolidation (BPC) created a reliable management information platform. Michel Vermeij and Pascal Pater of Endemol explain how this brings stability to both IT and Group controlling and the end users.

Text: Danielle Gruijs - Springfish

The Endemol Group had already been using SAP BPC for its financial reporting for some time. Last year the organization faced the choice between deciding on internal or external hosting and support. “It was an opportunity to consider the housing of SAP BPC,” says Pascal Pater, Head of Group IT, Endemol. “The SAP BPC is, historically, a difficult subject for the internal ICT organization. System managers often found it hard to understand the SAP BPC solution as well as how to manage it technically. As a result, at critical times, solutions were not always readily available. Partly because of this, we decided to outsource to experts with profound knowledge of the package.”

“INTERNAL HOSTING WILL SOON CAUSE YOU TO LAG BEHIND”

“It appears that technical IT-staff have difficulty understanding SAP BPC,” he continues. “System managers are often too focused on other matters, with the result that SAP BPC is sometimes unintentionally neglected,” confirms Michel Vermeij, controller at Endemol Group. “An experienced system manager is more valuable externally. If you choose to host internally, you will soon lag behind – this was an important factor in our decision to outsource hosting and support.”

Following the implementation of SAP BPC by consultancy organization Finext, Endemol has outsourced the hosting and support of its financial information systems to Swap Support. “As a sister organization of Finext we work closely together with systems implementations, hosting and support,” says Wietse Mol, who has experience with the Endemol financial information systems of both sister organizations. “Our experiences with Finext have always been positive, both on a support as well as on a relationship level,” adds Michel Vermeij.

PEAK DEMAND ON A BUSINESS-CRITICAL SYSTEM

“Within the Endemol Group we have complex systems that need to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week,” says Michel Vermeij. “Mention the name Endemol and people think of programs such as ‘Goede Tijden, Slechte Tijden’, but we now have over 80 companies in 31 countries and the largest part of our turnover is derived abroad. In Australia they work at night; in the Middle East on Sunday - the system needs to be available at all hours.”

Moreover, business-critical financial reporting systems are characterized by a high peak demand, Michel Vermeij continues. “Around 100 people use the system intensively during 3 to 4 days a month, the rest of the time it is only used by a handful of people at the head office. But during those four days a month, the system is critical to the whole organization, right up to board level.”

“During peak demand we need a solution quickly if something goes wrong. This is one reason why we have chosen to outsource the hosting and support, I wanted a guaranteed responsive environment for SAP BPC,” says Pascal Pater. “Otherwise, you are dependent on the support service of SAP from India, Ireland or the USA and at that distance you soon become a ticket number.”

With a local partner for hosting and support we have direct lines and a swift service, without unmanageable procedures. This way is speedy and efficient, which is essential during a closing.”

“SAP takes responsibility for the standard functioning of the standard product,” says Wietse Mol. “But because many problems are related to a specific system of the organization, you need people who know the system concerned.”

MIGRATION PROCESS

The migration process from internal management to outsourcing went well, according to Pascal Pater and Michel Vermeij. “The external system managers were given sufficient space for a solid set-up of the technical systems and the infrastructure. After that, the data migration went seamlessly,” says Pascal Pater. “Instead of going to door A, we now go to door B.” Michel Vermeij says he hardly noticed the migration process. “The transition was timely; we didn’t notice much impact on the financial systems during the migration.”

Besides, a migration process is a good time to step up to the next version of the management information system. “During the data migration and outsourcing we also migrated to the next version of SAP BPC,” says Wietse Mol.



Pascal Pater (Endemol), Wietse Mol (Swap Support) and Michel Vermeij (Endemol)

INTERNAL STABILITY

Vermeij and Pater are positive about the results of the outsourcing of hosting and support. “The Swap Support people do their utmost to find a solution; no 9-5 mentality, just the solution,” says Vermeij. “It yields a controlled, stable and safe environment,” says Pascal Pater. “I am no longer bothered with patches, servers and such, and I can keep an eye on everything through reports. This way I still control who does what in the system and how, including the external support party.”

“If anything goes wrong, we now have a back-up support that knows all the ins and outs of the product, and also of our specific configuration,” says Michel Vermeij. “This has a positive effect on the response time. If, as often happens, there are problems during a closing or even during the quarter- or year-end closing, you already gain an hour if the phone is answered immediately and the issue is solved straight away.”

“This brings stability within the internal IT environment,” says Pascal Pater. “It gives us time to occupy ourselves with other issues.” Within the Endemol Group they face many developments that affect day-to-day operation. “We receive many ad hoc questions, recalculations and scenarios, which we are now able to address properly,” says Michel Vermeij. “This shows why it is important that the systems are stable and flexible,” continues Pascal Pater.

REPUTATION WITH THE SUBSIDIARIES

The end users within Endemol are positive as well. "The system availability is very high," says Michel Vermeij. "It now works better than before." "The system availability is better guaranteed and the environment is safe. Moreover, the speed and performance of the system are very good," says Pascal Pater. "It is simply a very good environment."

He notices another fringe benefit. "It is part of our reputation with the subsidiaries; we can offer a stable environment and good group support."

PROJECTS, HOSTING AND SUPPORT AS A WHOLE

Combining the necessary external expertise in implementation, hosting and support gives Endemol one focal point at outsourcing for all management reporting activities. "They have factual knowledge of the product, the hardware and the operating system and they have a high-quality team on all fronts, both functional and technical," says Michel Vermeij. "The people know our application well and understand our business."

"SOMETIMES IN IT YOU NEED TO HAND OVER ISSUES TO THE EXPERTS"

"As well as the hosting and support organization we can also deploy the project company of our sister organization," says Wietse Mol. "The support desk is not equipped to carry out large-scale implementations; between us we can discuss which expertise is needed when."

SAP IN THE CLOUD

In the future, Pascal Pater wants a SaaS-model for financial consolidation and reporting. "We want to be able to purchase services as the company requires them. A fixed amount per user, per service, per month is the future. It is flexible and transparent." "SAP needs to adopt Cloud services, but by way of the partners," he continues. "The partners definitely have a potential added value to the platform set-up and management. Furthermore, the customer relationship is of vital importance and is also better for SAP. A local hosting and support organization has an open mindset when looking for solutions because they also work with other products. "

"THINK BEYOND THE OLD IT STRUCTURES"

When asked for advice by organizations that are looking for stability in their financial information systems, Pascal Pater says: "Sometimes in IT you need to hand over issues to the experts. Financial information systems are critical to an organization, so choose for stability, consult the experts and try to think beyond the old IT structures."

To learn more about the possibilities for your organisation, contact Wietse Mol at +31(0)70 300 3035 or wietse.mol@swapsupport.nl.

ABOUT SWAP SUPPORT

Swap Support maintains and manages the systems at your financial department. We ensure the quality of data and thus the security of your financial reporting, consolidation and budgeting process for a wide range of renowned companies.

Swap Support is part of Qwinc, a network of companies, that is characterized by involved professionals who at customers really make a difference. Other companies within this network are Finext, Technision, Sonum International, Driezestig and Springfish.

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