

Schulte GmbH Automates Order Processing with Verastream Host Integrator

Forecasts annual savings of €230,000



Imagine receiving 5,000 invoices a day. Now imagine paying 40 people to manually process each one of those invoices. That's exactly what Schulte GmbH was doing before automating their order-processing system with Attachmate® Verastream® Host Integrator.

Founded in 1896 and headquartered in Essen, Germany, Schulte is a leading wholesaler of sanitary, heating, groundworks, and climate-control products for the construction market. A former subsidiary of Thyssen, the company employs roughly 2,000 people in 100 branch offices throughout the country. It sells 150,000 products to more than 40,000 customers and yields annual revenues of €750 million.

The Infrastructure Glitch

Before Verastream was implemented, Schulte's order-processing system was based on manual procedures. Some suppliers faxed their invoices and others sent invoices as Electronic Data Interchange documents. In either case, Schulte's IT infrastructure wasn't equipped to handle them.

The burden fell on Schulte employees. First they had to enter the required invoice data into an Oracle database. Next they had to confirm the accuracy of the invoice. For example, did Schulte actually order the parts in question? Did Schulte actually receive the parts? Had the right number of parts been delivered? To verify this information, employees had to manually

QUICK VIEW

Problem

Time-consuming and costly invoice processing due to manual procedures.

Solution

Used Verastream Host Integrator to automate and document order-processing system.

Results

- Number of invoices processed: up from 5,000 to 8,000 per day.
- Projected savings: €230,000 per year in operational costs.
- Projected timeframe for ROI: four months.

check the invoice against corresponding order and inventory information in an IBM S/390 mainframe-based ERP application. It was a time-consuming, error-prone task.

"We badly needed a way to speed up the process and synchronize the data in our Oracle database with our ERP application," said Thomas Wysocki, IT manager at Schulte. "With invoices coming in from about 400 suppliers, we're dealing with huge amounts of data. Maintaining the integrity of that data throughout the data-transfer process is crucial to our business."

Gaining Speed, Increasing Accuracy

Working with Attachmate Consulting Services and Exagon, a German systems integrator, Wysocki developed a faster, more accurate way to process invoices—one that would pose no threat to his legacy data. Key to the solution was Verastream Host Integrator, which he used to enable the exchange of information between the Oracle database and ERP application.

Verastream Host Integrator encapsulates mainframe data and logic via the screen interface to participate in today's service-oriented architectures. It transforms legacy applications into SOA assets by exposing business processes as web services, XML, Java, or .NET components

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– Thomas Wysocki
IT Manager
Schulte GmbH

that can be reused for new purposes. Whether applications are running on IBM Mainframe (System z, S/390), IBM i Series (AS/400), UNIX, OpenVMS, or HPe3000, Verastream can give users a new look and feel, without disturbing mainframe-application code or associated business processes.

Verastream Behind the Scenes

A process known as component modeling gives Verastream Host Integrator its unique ability to integrate legacy assets with newer generations of technology. Wysocki’s team completed the component-modeling process, which requires no rewriting of the host application, in three steps:

Step 1: Create the components

The Wysocki-Attachmate-Exagon team used the Verastream design tool to capture the required business data and logic from the mainframe-based ERP application. The design tool works by recording the screens and inputs necessary for various tasks (in this case, invoice-processing tasks) and then presenting the tasks as interchangeable components (in this case, Java components).

Step 2: Build a new application

Using the components generated in Step 1, the team built a new Java-based application. It was designed to access the data and invoice-processing business functions in the ERP application, as well as the invoice information in the Oracle database.

Step 3: Deploy the new application

With Verastream, composite applications—like Schulte’s new Java application—can be deployed across a range of operating systems and hardware platforms. At runtime, the new application automatically handles the required data validation and updating process.

Here’s how Schulte’s new order-processing system works: The new Java application automatically reads the invoice information residing in the Oracle database. The Java application then enters this information into the ERP application and checks it against existing order and inventory information.

The results of the comparison are picked up by the Java application and returned to the Oracle database. Depending on the results of the status check, the invoice will be validated and paid, or not. When the process is complete, all relevant information is stored in a Verastream log file—further satisfying Schulte’s need for data integrity.

ROI in Just Four Months

Today, Schulte data-entry employees can do significantly more processing in less time. Gone are the days when they had to painstakingly check each new invoice against the ERP application before paying a bill. Instead, invoices are checked automatically by the Java application using Verastream-generated components. As a result, Schulte employees can now process 3,000 more invoices a day.

The new solution has also had a strong impact on Schulte’s bottom line. “We expect to save €230,000 in the first year alone,” said Wysocki. “At that rate, we’ll see a return on our investment in just four months. You can’t get much better than that.”

About Verastream Legacy Integration Solutions

The Attachmate Verastream product line comprises a complete range of mainframe and web modernization tools—from basic rejuvenation to customized presentation and sophisticated high-performance integration. Verastream-generated services can be mixed, matched, and reused selectively to extend legacy functionality to new users or new composite applications. No code changes to legacy applications are required, so you can avoid risk while speeding up application integration, application development, and workflow enhancement.

About Exagon

Founded in 1994, Exagon Consulting & Solutions GmbH offers consulting, training, and support for IT. The company uses the ITIL Framework for implementing IT management processes. In addition to Attachmate software, Exagon has successfully used SAP and Microsoft technology to build new services for its customers. For more information, see www.exagon.com.

About Attachmate

Attachmate helps businesses extend, manage, and secure their IT investments. We offer a broad range of solutions—from terminal emulation, legacy integration, and PC lifecycle management products to innovative systems and security management tools. With our technology, more than 65,000 businesses worldwide are putting their IT assets to work in new and meaningful ways. Learn more at www.attachmate.com.



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