

Techem Energy Services GmbH & Co. KG



Techem Sends SAP Data Directly to the Archive

Europe's leading facilities service provider, Techem AG, continues to grow steadily in a staggering market. Techem is the undisputed #1 in using radio frequency equipment to collect heat and water meter readings in residences. Based on these meter readings, Techem creates the heating cost bills for over four million residences in Germany. The service provider offers its customers the digital access to an online archive of billing data. Incidental and service cost billing can be handled quickly and cost-effectively over the Internet. Since March 2005, Techem has been relying on the Centera long-term storage from EMC to ensure that these sensitive data are securely available at any time. The beauty of the new archive infrastructure is that all documents are directly transferred from the applications to the Centera. Techem simply eliminated an intermediate document management system and now has a cost-effective and efficient archive solution.

There are three archive areas in the IT area of Techem Energy Services GmbH & Co. KG. The SAP archive contains about 1.5 million contract-related documents. The online archive, which is fed by an Oracle information database, comprises over 2 million documents. There, Techem customers can request their incidental cost bills over the Internet. The third area is an archive with paper documents and microfilms, which will also be digitized in the near future.

Formerly, the SAP data were stored in the SAN (Storage Area Network) by means of the 'Easy Archiv' archiving software. However, the ever-increasing data volume had resulted in longer and longer indexing runs, so that the IT experts began to look for a new high-performance archive solution.

The requirements

- Cost-effective, consistent archive platform
- Integration of SAP, Oracle Collaboration Suite (OCS) and 'Heiztech' application with a revision-proof archive
- Offloading of the SAP systems
- Web access to the archive for customers and partners

The solution

- Direct integration of applications to Centera without DMS
- 2 x Centera
- ArchivLink for the transfer of SAP data to the Centera
- Document management covered by OCS

A solution without document management

In pre-selecting a suitable archive, Techem was assisted by the system house CSC Ploenzke. An analysis in mid-2004 found that the Oracle Collaboration Suite (OCS), whose use had been planned by Techem, could not yet meet the requirements for a revision-proof archive. Alternatively, the company investigated document management systems (DMS) that provided an archive function. However, there were frequent overlaps between the functionality of OCS and DMS. "A document management system working side by side with the Oracle Collaboration Suite would have resulted in a lot of duplication. Also, we would have been forced to make a permanent decision about what data should be integrated in what application," says Thomas van Kan, System Analyst Information Systems at Techem Energy Services GmbH & Co. KG, about the situation. Given this background, it quickly became clear that Techem needed an archive-only solution.

Critical aspects for the selection of the CAS (Content Addressed Storage) systems Centera from EMC were the Java interface for integrating the Web technology as well as the open interface for SAP, Oracle and a Techem-developed billing system. It also helped that the Centera was already relatively well accepted, compared to alternative solutions.

Centera ready after one month

The coordination of the Centera installation and application integration was handled by EMC-reseller Computacenter as a general contractor, based on its long-term relationships with Techem. From the placement of the order with EMC in late November 2004, it took only just over four weeks to make the Centera ready for productive service. EMC provided the storage systems for testing over the Web already prior to delivery. This enabled KGS Software GmbH, which was recommended by CSC Ploenzke, to develop the interface for the migration of the SAP data into the new archive. This company specializes in the integration of SAP with any DMS system via the ArchivLink software.



It took Techem only two weeks to complete the interface for the online archive. Following the data migration, all SAP data were available in the new CAS archive on March 1, 2005. The migration of the more than 200 gigabytes of data of the online archive is still running and will be completed by about mid-August 2005. The online data that were already migrated to the Centera have been in productive use since early March. Thomas van Kan is satisfied because there have not been any problems with the new environment since.

The archive is filling up

In the future, the data from the planned Oracle Collaboration Suite shall also directly flow into the Centera archive over an Oracle-developed interface. OCS will then become the leading application within the Techem infrastructure. The new 'Heiztech' application will be productively integrated with the CAS archive as an internal billing system, starting in August. In tests, this integration already worked perfectly today. Van Kan plans enhanced inquiry options for the online archive, which will include the SAP documents. A cross-application archive search function that is controlled by the OCS is already in preparation. In addition, it is planned to enhance the online services for the customers into a true portal solution, with the goal to further improve customer retention.

The direct integration of the applications with the EMC archive has been rewarding in two respects for Techem: On the one hand, no capital and implementation costs for a DMS solution have been incurred. On the other hand, Techem saved the effort of performing a full analysis of its business processes, which would have been mandatory before implementing a DMS.



Techem in Germany and Europe

Techem serves about 600,000 customers in Europe, with more than 6.7 million residences, and is thus the #1 provider of energy and water metering and billing services. Today, Techem is an organization with a number of subsidiaries and affiliated companies as well as partners and cooperations in all European

countries where it is a priority to save energy. 2,206 employees provide reliable, customized services in the following areas: Within the Techem Energy Services group, Techem is a provider for metering and billing services for heating and water. Time-saving online services and efficient consumption management complete the offering. Techem Energy Contracting has specialized for more than 10 years in energy contracting solutions for all kinds of real estate. Today, the company is one of the leading private providers in Germany. With more than 60 employees Techem Energy Contracting serves some 1,400 power supply systems in all parts of the country. The software and service solutions of Techem IT Services include, as a flagship product, the segment-specific enterprise software 'wodis', which supports all relevant business processes in the real-estate segment.

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