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SIMPLIFIED DATA EXCHANGES

CENIT's ENTERPRISE CONNECTOR software automates SAP data preparation for multi-CAD data exchanges.

► THE COMPANY

REHAU AG & Co, a specialist for materials and systems development as well as surface technology, is a reliable, sought-after supplier to the auto industry and other customers – not just as a systems supplier, but also and especially as a general contractor for entire functional ranges. For REHAU to be successful, its developers have to integrate incoming development data into the own SAP system for further processing, and/or export own CAD data from SAP to customers and suppliers. REHAU's business partners around the world require meta-data-enriched development data, and so the company continually has to manage widely differing nomenclatures and countless formats.

To standardize and automate these SAP import and export processes, REHAU decided in favor of CENIT's ENTERPRISE CONNECTOR software. This multi-CAD data exchange solution not only gave the

auto supplier a sustained efficiency boost – now, REHAU's management can also rest assured that all business partners receive the data they need in the formats they want. A sophisticated set of rules stored within the system ensures that these elaborate data assignments are now conducted automatically.

PLM. "In almost all cases involving data supply, our job is to arrange the integration of these highly complex and extremely voluminous customer data into our PLM system", explains Stefan Herrmann, Manager of Team Design and Simulation within the Engineering Exterior and Services Department.

“Thanks to ENTERPRISE CONNECTOR, we were able to reduce the risk of errors in the preparation of data for SAP import or export to a minimum.”

Stefan Herrmann
Manager Team Design and Simulation in Engineering Exterior and Services

► THE PROJECT

As a systems supplier to various vehicle projects for virtually all major auto makers, REHAU has to deal with intricate CAD data exchanges almost constantly. Not infrequently, the OEMs supply the enterprise with "half-vehicles", i.e. data packages that encompass the entire installation space. REHAU then has to integrate its own, yet-to-be-developed components into these packages. For their product lifecycle management solutions, REHAU relies on CATIA V5 and SAP

Among other things, this entails the interpretation of up to 70 characters-long, descriptive file names, as well as their translation into REHAU's own appellation syntax. "Especially when dealing with advanced projects, you should never underestimate the amount of work that has to be done prior to the actual data import," Herrmann emphasizes, "because you have to check whether the incoming data is already wholly or partially available within your PLM system. Doing this manually was a hugely time-consuming affair for our developers, and it earned them plenty

REHAU: SIMPLIFIED DATA EXCHANGES

of grey hairs", he adds. "You have to bear in mind the high costs involved, because you have to commit valuable development resources to routine tasks."

In the course of development work for any OEM order, REHAU also has to deal with the transfer of data to the auto maker. Since "only" the relevant design parts are made available here, the data complexity is not quite as high as for incoming data. But data exports from SAP and the respective preparation of own data during the project have to be conducted far more frequently. One major challenge lies in translating REHAU's own file names into those used by the customer's system.

► IMPLEMENTATION

REHAU's developers can now process these regularly occurring SAP imports and exports far more efficiently. "The support we receive from CENIT's ENTERPRISE CONNECTOR software allowed us to significantly reduce the amount of work we have to devote to our data exchanges, while at the same time improving our process security," says a pleased Stefan Herrmann, adding that "in this way, we managed to reclaim lots of valuable development time."

Prior to transfer, the data packages are prepared for each REHAU customer based on individually defined mapping rules. When incoming data is imported,

CENIT's ENTERPRISE CONNECTOR software checks whether the data is already available within the system, either completely or only partially. "To automate this check on the CATIA data, we defined a key with four properties within the SAP Document Info Record (DIR)", Herrmann explains. "These keys can't be changed by anyone. If incoming data is already

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available, the user makes a proactive decision as to whether the data should be left unchanged or overwritten." Here, proactive means that the system offers the user a table that serves as a basis for defining the approach to the current process.

"Throughout the project, we really benefited from the CENIT consultants' profound process knowledge", says REHAU expert Herrmann. "We and others in our industry are confronted with continually changing requirements, and that makes our processes very short-lived. Despite all that, CENIT immediately understood what our work is all about. In all cases,

their proposals helped to improve our internal and external processes." For Herrmann, the best aspect is that the solutions could all be implemented ad-hoc while the project was still ongoing. "We're amazed at what great results can be achieved with a standard solution in such a high-flux environment."

► ABOUT REHAU AG + CO

As a premium brand for polymer-based solutions, REHAU is an internationally leading provider for the construction, automotive and other industry sectors. Acclaimed innovative strength, a cross-sector setup, and the resulting synergetic efficiency make REHAU unique as a modern, professionally run family enterprise in the plastics industry. Among the company's core competencies are materials and systems development as well as surface technology. With approx. 15,000 employees at more than 170 locations around the world, REHAU holds a global reputation as an innovator in these fields.

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