



NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES AND LEANER PROCESSES THANKS TO IFS APPLICATIONS™

IFS Applications provided Thomas with an IT solution that enabled the company to move into an entirely new area of business and become leaner in the process. Easy to install, the solution went live on schedule without any disruptions to production. Now the company enjoys leaner process management, better data quality, and the IT capacity to attract and handle even more customers.

CHANGING TACK

In 1999, Thomas approached DaimlerChrysler with a new business idea. As a specialist in bed systems and rehabilitation aids, Thomas wanted to offer the premium supplier of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) a new concept in driver comfort. As it happened, DaimlerChrysler was looking for a top-quality sleeping berth. The companies came to an agreement, but before Thomas could offer truck drivers an ergonomic alternative to their usual hard plank beds, the company had to review its organizational setup. Here, information technology was top of the list. Thomas had to adjust to the frequency of delivery required by DaimlerChrysler's supply chain. "We realized very quickly that we wouldn't get far with our old ERP bespoke solution," the CFO and head of IT, Wilfried Zilken, remembers.

It was true that the tailored legacy system, based on Cobol and Assembler, covered the requirements of the furniture and health business. But now Thomas had to build a solution that also had to serve the supplier business for the Actros range of trucks from Mercedes Benz, especially in respect of process transparency and quality management issues—a task that was hardly achievable with the old solution. "We could not even add the EDI interface that is mandatory for functioning supply chain management. At least not at an acceptable cost," Wilfried Zilken recalls.

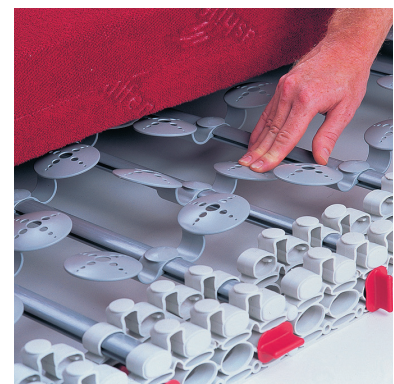
PACKAGED, INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC COMPONENT SOLUTION

Given the limitations of its legacy systems, the company decided to search the market for a standard ERP solution to meet its requirements. IFS, with its extensive experience of the automotive industry, offered a package of industry-specific components and was selected from the final short list, which included a number of local and global German ERP vendors.

ABOUT THOMAS GMBH

Thomas GmbH comprises three companies: Thomastechnik + Innovation develops and builds highly modern and multi-functional bed systems and innovative materials, Thomas Sitz- und Liegemoebel (seats and sleeping berths) sells the Lattoflex brand, and Thomashilfen develops and sells products and technologies for the rehabilitation and health care sector.

The family-run corporation has 250 employees. About 150 of these work with IFS Applications. From product development to production and sales, Thomas operates exclusively from Bremervoerde, Germany. In addition it has sales offices in Austria, the Czech Republic, and Switzerland.



INHOUSE-LED IMPLEMENTATION

When implementing the new software application, Thomas used its own in-house capabilities. Wilfried Zilken explains the underlying strategy: “After intensive coaching from external consultants, we took on the actual implementation ourselves. Every time it was time to define a solution, we got IFS to check its feasibility, and eventually did the migration ourselves.”

After a five-month implementation phase, the first software installation went live in the Thomashilfen subsidiary. Afterwards the lessons learned from the initial project were used to facilitate implementation in the other divisions: Thomas Sitz- und Liegemöbel (seats and sleeping berths) and Thomas Technology and Innovation went live at the same time, as these two companies order products and services from each other.

ADDED VALUE THROUGH AUTOMATION

From the first moment after the solution went live, there have been no disruptions—and all the components were up and running as scheduled.

Since then the new software solution provides considerable added value because so much can be automated. The DaimlerChrysler contract is one example. One of Thomas’s biggest customers, it orders about 1,600 sleeping berths in two variants each month. Thanks to IFS Applications, Thomas can handle the major increase in orders without requiring extra administration resources. When DaimlerChrysler enters its customer order into IFS Applications via EDI, the entire process is automated, up to and including the generation of the goods delivery notes. Besides its capacity, the ease of use of IFS Applications was another benefit that Thomas appreciated. “In addition to DaimlerChrysler, we process another major customer in the system and our users don’t even notice it,” Wilfried Zilken concludes.

BENEFITS

- Optimized process management
- End-to-end processes
- Greater transparency
- Improved data quality

SOFTWARE

IFS Foundation1™
 IFS Financials™
 IFS Sales and Service™
 IFS Engineering™
 IFS Manufacturing™
 IFS Distribution™
 IFS Maintenance™
 IFS Document Management™
 IFS Quality Management™
 IFS Business Performance™
 IFS Project Management™



“Thanks to IFS Applications, we were able to cope with a huge increase in orders with hardly any increase in administration costs.”

Wilfried Zilken, CFO and head of IT,
 Thomas GmbH

