DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH builds on success with IBM Netfinity and Linux.

For more than 50 years, Saarlouis-based DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH has been producing high-quality steel products. From this mid-sized, mainly regionally active company, a group with international coverage and a focus on steel and equipment engineering has developed. Since 1997 the DSD Group is a company owned by FERROSTAAL AG in Essen, which in turn is a subsidiary of the MAN group. DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH maintains more than 40 locations as well as five plants worldwide, and achieves an annual production capacity of 50,000 tons of steel. During the 1999/2000 fiscal year alone, 5,200 employees helped to realize global sales of 687 million Euro. The core business areas are structural steel engineering, assembly and industrial facility services, as well as transportation and ventilation. DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH's clientele reaches around the globe and consists of private investors, municipalities, governments and nations. The high-rise Commerzbank building in Frankfurt am Main, the steel construction of the atrium wall of the Burj Al Arab hotel in Dubai and the Schwarze Pumpe power plant at Cottbus are among the projects that the company has been instrumental in realizing. In Lisbon, over a three-year period, DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH widened the Tejo bridge by two lanes, bringing it to six, while also erecting a second cover for the railway line. A new main girder cable was added that is three meters higher than the old cable routing, as well as a new composite steel bridge for rail lines. When the bridge was opened in 1999 for general traffic, about 17,000 additional tons of steel were incorporated into it.

DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH assembles all of its projects on-site, while the administration is located at the headquarter in Saarlouis. For optimum handling of its business processes, DSD introduced SAP R/2 in 1989, which was migrated to R/3

Industry	Steel and facilities engineering
Application	SAP R/3
Software	Linux
Hardware	Netfinity Server

"Linux' price, its ease of administration and operational stability are convincing. For us, it is the ideal alternative."

Andreas Münchow, Systems Administration
DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH

in 1996. The modules in use are FI, CO, MM, HR, PS and SD. The SAP system covers 49 company codes that run on Sun with Oracle databases.

Linux: First choice in the Internet landscape

Within the framework of its Internet activities, DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH sought a solution in 1996 that would connect the company in the simplest, most effective manner to the Internet and to SAP R/3, using UNIX as a basis. Additionally, the company wanted to gather its own expertise in this area without relying permanently on external help. The choice was Linux: The operating system proved to be very user-friendly, easily administered and exceptionally stable in operation. Today, DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH uses five Linux systems for the Internet. They are installed on standard PCs and have been developed into a crash-proof solution using additional components. "Linux runs so well that we started wondering when it would be released by SAP as a platform," says Andreas Münchow.

An initial go-ahead was given in 1999. DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH became an FCS client of SAP and got the chance to apply its knowledge to Linux-based applications development. The very good experiences with the operating system were decisive in taking the first step. For the first project, the HR module was chosen. The high standards of data protection and security usually requires the installation of the HR module on a separate system. "One reason to run the HR module on a separate system was the sensitivity of the data," says Andreas Münchow. Another point in its favor was the frequent updates in the HR system, known as the Legal Change Packages, which contain new laws, tax changes and other, mostly country-specific, changes that must be updated again and again. Says Andreas Münchow: "The HR updates often affected other modules, thereby making comprehensive tests within the entire SAP R/3 system necessary. That is a nuisance and takes time. We didn't want to deal with that."

IBM Netfinity: Optimum Linux platform

DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH's initial experiences came in handy when they selected their hardware platform. "We can draw on many years of experience with Linux and have become convinced that a capable platform belongs to a capable operating system," says Andreas Münchow. In addition to the high expectations for processing and stability, it was a matter of finding high-performance servers that would also be able to take the load off other existing server environments. That's why all systems that came into question were subjected to rigorous testing and targeted problem situations. IBM Netfinity won DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH over with its undiminished stability and became the new platform of choice. "IBM Netfinity is significantly more fault-tolerant and capable than comparable systems. Our tests and production have proved that in every respect," Andreas Münchow declares.

An IBM Netfinity 5500 M20 forms the basis for the DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH's complex HR system. The system works with a Dual Pentium III Xeon processor and 4 GB main memory. Oracle serves as the database, and availability is ensured by a data mirroring system via RAID. The system enables 40 HR users to access about 5 200 master data sets. It guarantees comprehensive payrolling of workers and employees from Germany, France, and Luxembourg in accordance with the respective legal provisions and corresponding shift differentials. Andreas Münchow sums it up: "IBM supports Netfinity for Linux, and together with SAP, we implemented the pilot project. The years of Linux use were consistently problem-free. But even if that weren't the case we always knew that we could rely completely on the support."

Decision establishes IBM Netfinity throughout the company

Once the decision in favor of IBM Netfinity was made, this platform was introduced on a company-wide basis. Now, about a dozen systems are in use, all configured and set up according to their standards. "The fact that we have not had any system crashes or errors either in the Linux environment or the network confirms our choice of IBM Netfinity again and again."

After DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH successfully introduced the Euro in October 2000, further module introductions have followed in the subsequent year. On the basis of IBM Netfinity and Linux, the company wants to expand its Internet activities. Currently a business-to-business procurement system is being developed that will optimize inventory and procurement. No decision has been made yet as to the choice of an operating system. However, because of his experiences up to now, Andreas Münchow does consider the possibility of designing a solution based purely on Linux.

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This customer story is based on information provided by DSD Dillinger Stahlbau GmbH and illustrates how one organization uses IBM products. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described; IBM does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

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