SOVAG: OPTIMISED BUSINESS PROCESSES INCLUDING TEXT AND OUTPUT MANAGEMENT

SOVAG is a traditional insurance broker with an Eastern European focus. With just 150 employees, the specialist offers private and business customers a broad range of sectors. To remain successful in the market as a small insurer, a great deal has to be processed quickly and flexibly. To ensure it continues to convince in the areas of customer satisfaction, service quality and productivity, SOVAG has optimised its central business processes with a DMS solution with electronic files and integrated text and output management. Following an extensive evaluation phase, SOVAG decided in favour of the modern Macros InsuranceSuite. And the decision was spot on, as it took just six months from the initial design phase before the solution was up and running.

SOVAG

"In all my previous 25-year experience in the German insurance industry, the introduction of the DMS is a unique success story",
Franz A. Gänßler, SOVAG Director.

THE CUSTOMER

SOVAG is a highly specialized insurance company with an Eastern European focus. SOVAG is the short name for "Schwarzmeer und Ostsee Versicherungs-Aktiengesellschaft" - literally translated: Black Sea and Baltic Insurance Company. Founded in 1927 as a transport insurer, SOVAG has focused up to the present day on Eastern European business and has good contacts and decades of experience there. Small and medium-sized companies are at the centre of activities for its commercial products, while private customers are mostly people of German origin who emigrated from the East. Measured against the just under 150 employees and premium income of around 110 million euros, customers are offered an extensive product and sector mix. The portfolio of the Hamburg-based company, with branches in Berlin, Cologne, Vienna, London and Moscow, include: vehicle, property, liability, transport and accident insurances, and active reinsurance.

THE CHALLENGES

SOVAG was slowly reaching its limits with regard to the processing of paper documents. The branch principle led to an inefficient distribution of orders for processing, excessive productivity disparities and, ultimately, to growing problems in providing the necessary expertise and resources in each branch. The processes, which were based on paper files, were not standardised or automated to any significant degree.

It was not always possible to give customers answers to their inquiries in the time called for. "As a small insurer that reacts quickly and with flexibility to the wishes of its special customer groups, we can avoid the high pressure of competition in the industry to some degree. But in the long term, SOVAG needs optimised processes and a modern, reliable technical infrastructure to survive," says Gänßler with regard to the initial situation. Measured by data volumes, employees or process numbers, SOVAG is a small player for DMS providers. But it is the special way of working and unusual mix of sectors that makes it a particular challenge to introduce an electronic file and output management system in a company of this small size. "Our decision in favour of Macros Reply was not only based on technical reasons, since we only took proven industry solutions into closer consideration. Rather, the expertise and experience of the Macros project team under Erwin Straub were the deciding factors for us," says the director.

THE SOLUTION: FOCUS ON PROCESSES

It also explains why procedural aspects were in the foreground of project goals. The plan was to standardise, streamline and optimise processes with the help of the electronic files and the Macros InsuranceSuite. One focal point here was the emphasis on service in the organisational structure and its separation into front and back office. "The clear objectives and the unusually short decision-making paths made a major contribution towards the remarkably fast implementation and success of the project," explains Straub. This meant that basic decisions, such as the implementation division by division or the use of an only slightly modified standard client, were taken quickly and speeded up the project overall. With AIDA from GENEVA-ID as the inventory management system and Silent Cube from FAST LTA as the storage medium, systems are also being used and implemented for which Macros Reply has already developed powerful interfaces during other projects.
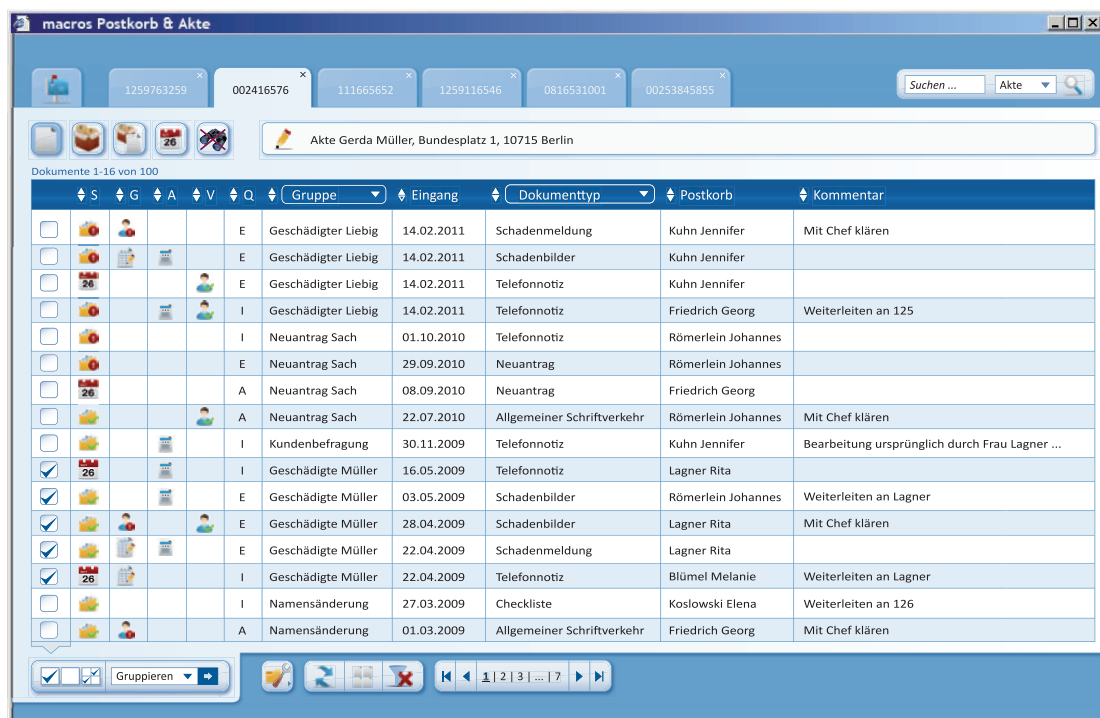

Illustration: Macros eFile (different skin at SOVAG; names are fictitious)

QUICKLY IMPLEMENTED AND QUICKLY LEARNED

Just six months after the start signal was given for the project, the Macros InsuranceSuite had already been rolled out to the Vehicle department. Once the existing files had been digitalized and migrated in a previous step, the entire incoming post was digitalized by a service provider and manually indexed. The parameterizable distribution rules in the Macros InsuranceSuite mean that all post is now automatically allocated to group and employee inboxes. Instead of stacking paper files on their desks, the employees now handle processes and electronic files on two large monitors. At the end of 2012 there were almost 700,000 documents with 5.6 million pages in the system. All documents and processes relating to the customer can now be accessed at all times and from any location. Access, search and notice functions make this work easier. At the same time, the Macros InsuranceSuite controls the processes, enabling recurring documentation to be scheduled and appointments managed, for example. "The employees showed commitment, a readiness to learn and openness towards the quite substantial changes," says a delighted Gänßler.

MACROS ePRINT: OPEN ON ALL CHANNELS

Further clear efficiency gains were achieved at SOVAG in the area of text and output management for individual and mass correspondence. "Automated indexing of incoming post using OCR/ICR would not pay off at SOVAG due to its volumes. However, large efficiency potential was recognised in correspondence going out to customers and therefore implemented in a second project phase," explains Michael Dietl, Product Manager for Macros ePrint and Output Management at Macros Reply. Where employees previously had to fiddle around with Office programs, Winword templates and printouts at the workplace printer, much of their work is now handled with Macros ePrint. This software is an integration of the well-known

output management solution by Thunderhead in the Macros InsuranceSuite. The strategic cooperation agreed in 2011 between the two software producers made it possible to integrate the solutions to a broad extent.

This means that SOVAG employees can conveniently create and send letters, faxes, text messages and e-mails to their customers directly from the electronic files. Various templates are available for the individual media, channels, events and processes. Software wizards guide employees through the document creation process. In this way, the office staff are provided with access to all of the customer's relevant master data, which can then be inserted via drag and drop – and not as cryptic IT system variables, but in understandable, context-related names or in clear language. As a result of this, standard letters can be composed quickly and reliably using text components that are selected via checkboxes. Additional texts can be added using a free text editor and forms added as attachments.

Preparing and sending the bulk correspondence is just as flexible. Campaigns inviting car customers to compare their premiums at the end of three year, for example, now only take up a fraction of the time they used to, and they cost far less, too. Depending on the channel, the created documents are sent via a print provider or electronically at the touch of a button, indexed by the system, added to the file and then archived in an audit-proof manner as PDF/A documents. Deadlines are taken over by the recurring task and calendar management functions in the Macros InsuranceSuite. Another expansion would be to print barcodes or other two-dimensional codes on outgoing forms so that these could be assigned on their return directly and without further indexing requirements. Besides the fact that the customer is now open for all required communication channels, the Macros ePrint software produces further cost savings for SOVAG. One employee in Process Optimisation was given training for a software tool, which allows them to create new templates or change the names or scope of the available master data quickly and simply. The cost of external programming during operation has been cut to an absolute minimum and the insurer is able to react faster and with greater independence and flexibility to new requirements.

MEASURABLE RESULTS

The introduction of DMS has not only improved transparency with regard to individual customer processes. Companies that set out to control and improve their service quality towards customers must also continually measure it. "With our new infrastructure I can now press a button to receive the latest information about throughput and idle times. I can filter these according to priorities or division and calculate actual productivity in processing," says Gänßler. For SOVAG it is an enormous competitive advantage being able to quickly identify and react to fluctuations in service quality and productivity. "With the Macros InsuranceSuite we have found the right products and the right manufacturer. We are very satisfied with the product and its implementation," concludes Gänßler.