

Rexam BCNA

Clients Count on Stratus

Perfect Plants depend on SAP software and Stratus® servers

Business situation

When a consumer pops the top on a refreshing beverage, there's a good chance the can was manufactured by Rexam—the world's biggest maker of beverage cans and the fourth largest consumer packaging company. The global company's largest business is Rexam Beverage Can North America (BCNA), based in Chicago.

This long-time user of SAP® Business Suite applications wanted to take its manufacturing IT strategy to the next level. Functionality already customized in SAP R/3® software was enhanced and moved to the plant outside the corporate instance of the software. This allowed manufacturing data to be collected and reported on even when the central SAP application was inaccessible because the wide area network was down, or due to a software patch or system upgrade in the data center. With its 17 manufacturing plants running close to full capacity, downtime was plainly not acceptable.

While continuous availability of the data and transaction screens is vital, Rexam BCNA also needed to achieve its goals without the expense of deploying IT people at its manufacturing sites. Careful evaluation led Rexam BCNA to choose Stratus® ftServer® systems as the hardware platform for deploying the SAP® xApp™ Manufacturing Integration and Intelligence (SAP xMII) composite application, used to

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Paul Martin
CIO
Rexam PLC

Quick Facts

Solution profile

- "Lean MES" distributes key transactions to plants
- Addresses planned and unplanned downtime with local survivability
- Integrates seamlessly with SAP R/3 application
- Supports world-class quality and operational efficiency

Servers

- Platform for 17-site deployment (per site):
 - (1) ftServer 4300 for SAP xMII
 - (1) ftServer 2400 for Plant Analytics
 - (1) ftScalable™ storage for Plant Analytics
 - Installation, training, remote monitoring and maintenance services

Software

- SAP xMII composite application
- Oracle® 10i database
- Acumence Plant Analytics Server
- Microsoft® Windows Server® operating system

Systems integration

- Tata Consultancy Services

integrate manufacturing transactions with the SAP ERP application. The ftServer systems also drive the Acumence Plant Analytics Server, used to monitor operations and resolve manufacturing exceptions in real time.

Business objectives

Rexam established an aggressive set of project goals:

- Address planned and unplanned systems downtime with local survivability
- Create a "lean MES" framework that uses SAP solutions for both central planning and execution
- Integrate seamlessly with SAP R/3 software
- Enhance information sharing across multiple systems
- Reduce customization in SAP R/3 by moving functionality to the SAP xMII composite application at the plants

The availability solution

Rexam BCNA evaluated several alternatives for enhancing the availability of SAP transaction screens at its plants. Adding a second instance of SAP R/3 infrastructure at the enterprise level to accommodate system upgrades and maintenance would only help address planned downtime.

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Complexity and cost also ruled out a third-party manufacturing execution system (MES) with its own database at each plant connected to SAP R/3 software via an enterprise application (EAI) tool.

The right solution came into focus when exploring the capabilities of SAP's newest offerings including the SAP xMII composite application. Combining these with a local database, project integrator Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) created a system that provided user-friendly screens at the shop floor, which under normal circumstances, synchronously updated SAP R/3 software running in the data center. In the event the SAP R/3 application was down or the WAN was not available, plant personnel could still access their transaction screens. Transactions would be stored and later forwarded when the SAP ERP system was back online.

"We decided the ftServer system is the right platform for maintaining this critical link between the corporate instance and our plants."

John Niemzyk
Vice President and CIO
Rexam BCNA

Rexam BCNA considered building clusters, before selecting Stratus fault-tolerant servers, but clusters would pose ongoing management challenges they wanted to avoid. "We were looking for 'five nines' of availability," said Ganesh Iyer, manager, SAP Application Development at Rexam BCNA. "It was also very critical to us that Stratus servers did not require intervention from an IT person at the plant, either for problem resolution or to manage the application."

Stratus ftServer systems are a family of ultra-reliable Intel® processor-based server hardware for Microsoft Windows Server and Red Hat® Enterprise Linux® operating systems. Continuous Processing® features — including lockstep redundant hardware, failsafe system software, and ActiveService™ capabilities — are built into the servers to safeguard uptime and data. Applications need not be modified in any way to benefit from superior availability protection.

The ftServer family has delivered over 99.999% uptime at Stratus customer sites worldwide. "We are taking this step to make sure that transactions are always available," said John Niemzyk, vice president and CIO, Rexam BCNA. We decided the ftServer system is the right platform for maintaining this critical link between the corporate instance and our plants."

Business impact

Rexam's MES solution, built using the SAP xMII composite application running on Stratus ftServer systems, dramatically reduces both planned and unplanned downtime. Moving customizations from the SAP R/3 software to the plant enables corporate agility by allowing more frequent updates of the SAP R/3 application. What's more, using SAP solutions for both manufacturing execution and central planning will facilitate information sharing, collaboration, and dissemination of best practices.

Transactions retain a familiar look and feel so shop-floor operators don't have to be retrained. The solution also provides an easy-to-use toolkit for creating and optimizing transaction screens — important for supplying information to operators, while trimming the number of screens and keystrokes.

"This is proving to be a very affordable solution which delivers key benefits to the business," said Paul Martin, CIO of parent company Rexam PLC. "Success has been about proper planning and getting the right partners in place."

About Stratus

Stratus Technologies, an SAP Global Technology partner, is the Availability Company®. From award-winning ftServer platforms that deliver 99.999+% uptime to its ftScalable™ storage array to Continuous Availability Lifecycle Management (CALM™) services, Stratus focuses on a single objective – ensuring end-to-end solutions availability. Easy to install, use and maintain, Stratus solutions tame complexity in SAP environments like the "Perfect Plant" or in any environment where uptime is critical.

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