Bayerische Asphalt-Mischwerke improves liabilities management with IBM Lotus Notes and Domino

**The Challenge**
Managing claims in major roadworks projects can be a complex task, involving numerous parties and large sums of money. Bayerische Asphalt-Mischwerke wanted to improve customer service and reduce business risk by introducing a single system for all damages and liabilities management.

**The Solution**
ILS Consult (www.ils.at), an IBM Business Partner, helped the company to develop a new liabilities management application on the company’s IBM Lotus Notes and Domino platform, which runs on Microsoft Windows Server 2003 under VMware on IBM System x3650 servers.

**The Benefits**
Single repository for liabilities data helps users find all the relevant information easily. Built-in workflows help to ensure that the right actions are taken to resolve each case quickly. Familiar Lotus Notes interface reduces the need for user training. Reliability of Lotus Domino platform ensures high availability.
“We have been using IBM Lotus Notes and Domino as our corporate communications system for several years, and we were impressed with its capabilities as a platform for application development.”

Alois Kellringer, Head of Organisation and Reengineering, Bayerische Asphalt-Mischwerke Gesellschaft GmbH & Co. KG

Bayerische Asphalt-Mischwerke Gesellschaft GmbH & Co. KG (BAM) is the largest producer of asphalt in the German state of Bavaria. The company employs 300 people at 50 production sites, four offices in Augsburg, Nürnberg, Würzburg and Plattling, and its headquarters in Munich.

The company is organised on a largely decentralised basis, with the head office providing key services such as IT, human resources, research and development, purchasing, accounting and finance and legal advice to the branch offices, which otherwise operate independently. This organisational structure works well for the company in most circumstances – but it could cause problems in certain situations, such as when damages and liabilities need to be assessed.

Alois Kellringer, Head of Organisation and Revision at BAM, explains: “If a customer reports that a section of construction works has been damaged, the local branch office calls our central laboratory and an expert drives out to the site to survey the situation. So the local and the central teams are both involved – as well as the customer, the insurance company, and if necessary the relevant public body.

“In this kind of situation, people tended to store information in a number of different systems and spreadsheets, so it was difficult for our staff to get hold of all the relevant information for each case – preventing us from resolving these situations quickly.”

The company decided to create an application that would store all information on damages and liabilities in a single repository – giving staff easy access to everything from contact details to photographs. Each case would have its own record in the system, and workflows would ensure that the right actions were taken to enable a prompt resolution.

Building on Lotus Notes and Domino

“We have been using IBM Lotus Notes and Domino as our corporate communications system for several years, and we were impressed with its capabilities as a platform for application development,” comments Kellringer. “We have built several applications ourselves, but we realised that the proposed damages and liabilities management system would be beyond our capabilities. We needed a partner with the experience and technical skills to develop a successful solution.”

A trusted partner

BAM turned to ILS Consult, an IBM Business Partner specialising in IT infrastructure, consultancy and services. A three-person development team from ILS Consult worked closely with BAM’s in-house team to define the requirements for the new application and map out the business processes for the workflows.

The application, known as the electronic damage record, has two modes: a ‘fast capture’ mode, which helps employees enter new damage records into the system quickly, throughout the whole corporate
intranet; and an ‘expert’ mode, which is used by the case manager to perform detailed cost calculations and other extended functions.

“One of the chief benefits of using Lotus Notes and Domino for this application is the familiarity of the interface,” comments Kellringer. “Our employees all use Lotus applications on a daily basis, so they find the system very easy to use and intuitive – and there is no real need for specific training.”

Equally, the company benefits from the advanced access management features of the Lotus platform, which is designed to ensure that employees can only access the information they need, and keeps confidential data secure.

**Benefits of integration**

The electronic damage record application leverages Lotus Notes and Domino messaging to keep all relevant staff informed about the progress of each case. The application delivers data to the company’s ERP software – an IBM i application called DCW – for financial accounting purposes.

“By providing a single repository for all the relevant data, and by integrating with our existing systems, the electronic damage record system solves the problem of communicating effectively across a decentralised organisation,” explains Kellringer. “Equally, centralising this information is helping us to build up a knowledge base so that lessons learned in one case can be used to optimise our processes in the future.”

With a range of built-in workflows covering numerous different causes of damage, the electronic damage record ensures a swift and appropriate response to most issues – and new workflows can be easily created when necessary. The system ensures that every action on every case is tracked and can be audited – and no case can be removed from the system until it has been properly resolved. As a result, customers should receive a faster and more professional service.

Looking to the future, BAM intends to upgrade its Lotus Notes and Domino installation from version 7.03 to version 8, to take advantage of new functionalities.

Alois Kellringer concludes: “The Lotus software and System x hardware provide a highly available and reliable platform for the electronic damage record application, helping our users access the information they need, whenever they need it. ILS Consult and BAM’s in-house team have done an excellent job of developing an IT solution that aligns perfectly to the needs of the business – helping us deliver better customer service and improve our working practices to reduce damages in the future.”