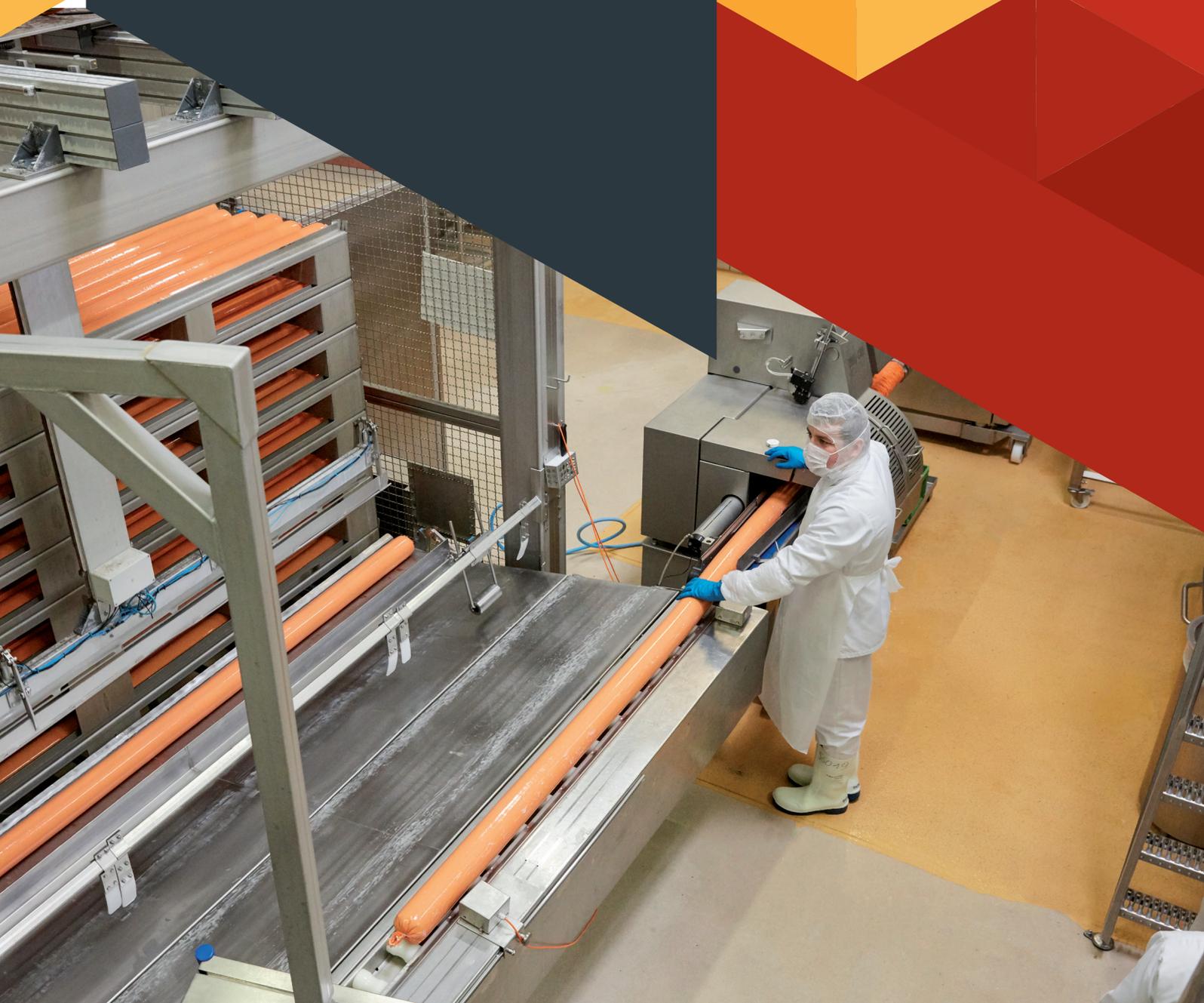


Case study



zur Mühlen Gruppe

Special sausages with EDI



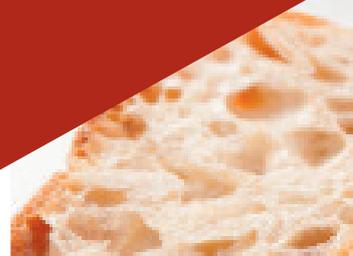
the zur Mühlen Group: Special sausages with EDI

With menten, the zur Mühlen Group has an EDI service provider that reacts quickly and implements unusual customer requirements promptly with its EDI solution i-effect.

However different their product ranges may be, all large retail companies have one thing in common: they already send and receive many business documents digitally. Invoices, shipping notifications and orders no longer exist in paper form, but only as electronic data streams. The exchange of business documents by electronic means (EDI) is therefore standard in the trade at first glance, but has many special features in detail. A major supplier such as the zur Mühlen Group, which supplies products of the highest quality in the German food retail and specialist trade, has to adapt to this.

Almost every consumer in Germany knows brands such as Gutfried, Böklunder or Redlefsen. Toge-

ther with them and others, the zur Mühlen Group is an important manufacturer of meat and sausage products. 4,500 employees (depending on season) produce more than two billion packages a year. The number of invoices produced by the company's accounting department in its SoftM ERP software is correspondingly high: More than 500 invoices leave the house every day and are transmitted via EDI to the major German retail chains. Since 2017, zur Mühlen Group has been using i-effect, menten GmbH's solution for electronic data exchange and data integration on IBM Power Systems.



Flexible and fast support

„In 2017, we switched from another provider to menten,” explains Norbert Ruhr, the company’s IT manager. The reason was on the one hand the broad functionality that i-effect offers. From Norbert Ruhr’s point of view, however, an EDI service provider must be particularly flexible and have fast response times in support. If a customer has special requirements with regard to the format of incoming documents, they should be able to implement these quickly as a supplier - like menten GmbH, to whose software zur Mühlen Group is currently converting its electronic data traffic step by step.

The process started with outgoing invoices, where urgent changes were to be made to outgoing INVOIC messages for a large customer, which had not been possible with the previous service provider. This is followed by electronic delivery notes (DESADV), which were still in the test phase at the beginning of 2019. Incoming orders were still pro-

cessed with the previous tool at this time. menten GmbH installed i-effect as a dedicated EDI server in the demilitarized zone (DMZ) of the customer’s IT infrastructure and since then has been fully responsible for the system. In the day-to-day business of invoice dispatch, the work consists primarily of connecting new partners and processes.



Retailers with special requests

Although there is a lot of talk about standards in IT, a look into practice - especially in retail - shows that almost everyone has individual wishes and specific requirements, so that the exception is the rule. The Mühlen Group supplies cartons to a retail chain, for example, in which there is not only one type of sausage but various products from

the range. This was what the company wanted to have marked on the invoice, broken down by variety and quantity. Another customer does not work with the standard European Article Number (EAN), but has his own article numbers. The invoices in SoftM must therefore be adjusted accordingly. The data is then converted to the EDIFICAT-INVOIC outbound file format using mapping. „This has been implemented very quickly by menten - a significant leap in service quality. The service provider simply convinced us with its competence and its ability to implement the desired type of news quickly,“ says Norbert Ruhr. „Even simpler tasks now run at an unprecedented speed with menten.“

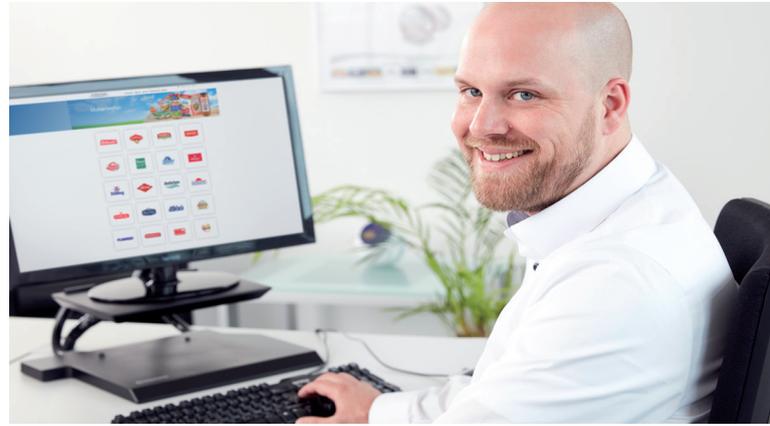


Monitoring possible at any time

The service is one thing, but menten was also able to convince with regard to product technology. According to users of the zur Mühlen group, i-effect is much more comfortable than other EDI tools in terms of debugging. You can create your own analyses and statistics and use logs to check whether and when a message arrived, whether it was sent a second time in the event of an error, and so on. In this way, business-critical business processes with external business partners can be comprehensively monitored and controlled. „Actually, we don't want that because it's not our core business, we only do rudimentary monitoring,“ says Norbert Ruhr. The ability to check daily whether the messages have been sent properly, however, is a reassuring idea for the IT manager. With i-effect this works via a graphical user interface in the browser: WebControl offers intuitive operation and thus opens up completely different monitoring possibilities than the classic green screen.

When all invoice recipients have been changed over, the next special requests await with the delivery notifications, which must be implemented in DESADV format. Here, for example, a customer has concrete ideas as to how so-called mixed pallets should be displayed in the EDI message.

The starting point for both invoicing and delivery notes is the food manufacturer's SoftM ERP sys-



tem. The internal IT department has developed interfaces that provide the EDI converter with invoice and notification data. i-effect regularly checks whether data is to be retrieved and converts the business transactions from the SoftM interface (DB) into the EDIFACT INVOIC and DESADV formats during mapping so that the recipient can process them in his systems. This is followed by electronic transmission via AS2 and X.400. menten GmbH also regulates the setup of the technical connection to the customer and thus assumes all EDI-relevant work for the zur Mühlen Group: provision of the software, creation of new mappings, connection of partners, EDI transmission and support - an EDI full service, carried out on the zur Mühlen Group's own EDI and communication server infrastructure.

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The company

The zur Mühlen Group, headquartered in Bök-lund, is one of the leading European companies in the meat and sausage industry. With 4,000 employees, the zur Mühlen Group produces more than two billion consumer packagings annually at 11 locations in Germany and Poland. The export share of the company is 25%, which is delivered to 40 countries of the world. The strongly expanding group of companies focuses on innovative investments. In recent years, around 100 million euros have been invested in optimising operational processes. zur Mühlen Group works with an integrated quality management system and thus meets national and international standards according to the certifications BRC, Bio, Halal, IFS, ISO, RSPO and the QS inspection system. Quality management activities are controlled centrally at the Technology Center in Satrup.





Challenges

Fast response times and a flexible tool like i-effect are decisive for the IT department of zur Mühlen Group when selecting an EDI service provider. The company was no longer satisfied with its previous partners and was looking for a service partner who could quickly implement even the most unusual wishes of its business partners.



Resolution

i-effect was introduced in 2017 and is to take over the entire electronic data traffic of the zur Mühlen Group in the long term. The EDI solution of menten GmbH regularly checks via an interface to the ERP system SoftM whether data can be retrieved and converts the data from the database into the formats EDIFACT INVOICE and DESADV in the course of the mapping.



Usefulness

Due to its flexibility i-effect offers more functionality than other EDI tools. The EDI process adapts effortlessly to the existing system landscape and is geared to the needs of the customer. Via WebControl, the zur Mühlen Group can independently create analyses and statistics as required and has greater overall transparency over electronic business transactions with customers.

Additional Information & Setup

For a free 30-day trial and detailed feature overview of the modules: www.i-effect.com

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menten GmbH is aimed at medium-sized IBM Power Systems users in all industries. Since 1989, the team has focused on the development of server-based IBM i standard solutions. Service and maintenance, system technology and hardware sales flank the IT services around the server family.