

June 27, 2007 | Comprehensive customer relationship management processes at Westdeutsche ImmobilienBank:

Real Estate for Customers, Data for the Bank

As a special bank for real estate financing and transactions, Westdeutsche ImmobilienBank AG has consistently organized its structure around its customers. The technological side of this orientation is supported by an application based on the SAP Customer Relationship Management (SAP CRM) application. SAP CRM enables a view of an entire customer history and offers options for comprehensive analyses and reports. It also integrates with the SAP Loans Management and SAP Collateral Management applications. And it supports the central administration of data on all customers and business partners in the SAP for Banking solution portfolio.

As a wholly-owned subsidiary of WestLB AG, Westdeutsche ImmobilienBank AG (WIB) positions itself as a specialist in complex real estate financing and investment banking in real estate within the group. Around 500 employees work in six offices in Germany and five international offices to create financing models in Germany and abroad and financing plans for housing. The company also offers real estate and consulting services through its affiliated companies.

Portrait

Whether it's in retail, catering, office space, or housing, business is booming for German real estate financiers. Business is also outstanding in the United States, south and southeast Europe, and Japan.

Westdeutsche ImmobilienBank AG (WIB) is a wholly owned subsidiary of WestLB AG and is one of the most important vendors in real estate. The company was founded in 1995 and handled a business volume of ?25.8 billion last year alone. WIBN customers include private and public customers, savings banks, financial institutions, and other commercial real estate customers. WIB offers all national and international financing, consulting, and products for the capital market. If needed, the company can enhance its broad spectrum of real estate products with the services of WestLB and affiliated companies.

Integration instead of insular workbooks in Microsoft Excel

"For this kind of comprehensive service offering, the entire organization of the bank must be oriented to customers – on the technology side as well," says Reinhold Babin, CRM project director at WIB. That's why WIB decided to install an integrated sales system for all national and international markets – to control and analyze potential and existing customers in all sales areas. As a first step, the board decided to equip its investment areas, which serve the commercial real estate business in Germany and abroad, with an appropriate CRM application. "The legacy CRM system, IVIS, and reporting based on Microsoft Excel were to be replaced with a user-friendly platform from SAP," says Babin. IVIS and Microsoft Excel were not integrated and were not always available for informative analyses, making it difficult to evaluate the data.

With IT partner XPACT Consulting AG, WIB looked for a CRM application that would meet its requirements. XPACT, a consulting firm that specializes in banking solutions based on SAP software, has been the IT partner of WIB for many years. The system integrator had converted WIB's heterogeneous IT landscape to SAP software little by little over the past few years. That has enabled WIB to lower its IT costs by about 50% since 1999. "As IT managers at WIB, we were settled on trusting our operations – even for CRM – to SAP software from the very beginning," says Babin.

The choice was made quickly for CRM to Go for Banking, a consulting and implementation package from maihiro GmbH. The preconfigured processes that maihiro offers in the package convinced the board of WIB as early as the

first meeting in the summer of 2006. “With CRM to Go for Banking, we quickly had a gap analysis from the process workshops with the primary users – customer consultants, IT directors, and analysts. The direction for CRM was set after just one week,” says Babin to explain the quick decision.

The project moved ahead rapidly and went live just five months after its September 2006 start. The quick implementation of the product, which is based on the SAP CRM application, the SAP NetWeaver Portal component, and the SAP NetWeaver Business Intelligence component, was helped by templates for industry-specific processes.

Connection to other banking systems

The special characteristics of the newly created solution include complete integration with Lotus Notes as the organizer software and links to Microsoft Office applications. maihiro implemented account origination functionality for the first time in this project. It allows customer service representatives at WIB to jump to other banking systems from the CRM application – like the bank’s inventory system – where they can view the entire engagement with the customer. Customizing SAP software in the past did not allow this ability – in-house programming had to meet this requirement. As an SAP services partner and with the banking sector at SAP, maihiro integrated the functionality with the banking template of SAP CRM.

“The main point is that customer service representatives at WIB now have a quick look at sales opportunities, customer contact histories, product portfolios, and the documents stored in the customer’s records,” says Babin. That ability lets them map all business development comprehensively with their IT solution – from the first customer contact to closing a contract. A user-friendly quick-entry screen enables users to enter the most important information on customer history rapidly.

For analysis and reporting, users can generate an ad hoc report that gives an overview of all sales activities. The data is captured uniformly in the SAP CRM application and analyzed with SAP NetWeaver Business Intelligence, which creates more transparency. Customer service representatives see not only an overview of the time spent throughout a project, but also the amount of contribution margins. The graphical user interface for WIB customer service representatives was optimized to simplify navigation, reduce the number of mandatory fields, and condense the presentation of information.

In addition to the functionality available to customer service representatives, the application implemented by maihiro serves the WIB board as an important control instrument. The connection to core banking functions, such as those between the credit application process and the credit agreement in the core banking system, is delivered by the data required for sales forecasts or group reporting. The board has consolidated qualitative and quantitative data for the first time.

“That’s why WIB is planning to roll out a CRM application in private banking. The preliminary study is already underway,” says Babin.

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Uwe May is the founder and managing director of maihiro GmbH, which has offices in Munich and Vienna. He holds a degree in business administration and is responsible for the financial services branch within the company. The company is a long-term SAP services partner and specializes in the design of industry-specific CRM processes in marketing, sales, and service.