



IBM Customer Reference

Conforama

Synopsis:

French furniture retail chain improves customer satisfaction and internal business practices by consolidating its application infrastructure using IBM Rational XDE Modeler

Location:

Paris, France

Industry:

Retail

Focus Area:

e-business infrastructure

URL:

<http://www.conforama.com>

Customer Background:

A subsidiary of the Pinault-Printemps-Redout Group, Conforama is a retailer of furniture and home electronics. With 45 affiliated companies, Conforama has approximately 200 stores located throughout the world, including 135 stores located in France and 27 stores operated overseas. In 2000, Conforama had an annual turnover of €2.1 billion, and the organization employs more than 10,000.

Business Need:

Conforama was in need of a new technology for its sales desk processes. Like most furniture retailers, the customer used its 176 showroom stores to provide a comfortable setting for the display of its products. These showroom locations also included extensive backstock and warehousing space where surplus products were kept.

Over the years, this system had become overly complex and difficult to manage, which contributed negatively to customer satisfaction. This system depended on siloed Oracle, IBM Informix, 4GL and AIX-hosted applications for such operations as availability, authentication and printing. This structure was also causing difficulties for Conforama internally, aggravating employees and accumulating extensive management and licensing costs.

To mitigate these problems, Conforama wished to integrate its existing applications while developing new programs to operate on a consolidated, flexible platform. This system would provide the user with a single interface in order to more quickly serve customers. Ideally, this system would also allow Conforama to better track its customers' payment histories, shipping information and other records.

Solution:

Conforama implemented IBM Rational XDE Modeler to provide the centralized infrastructure for its sales desk applications. Leveraging the Rational software for development, Conforama integrated its legacy applications to a single, Web-enabled interface. As soon as the customer has completed this portal migration and integration, Conforama intends to use the Rational software to redevelop its existing applications to an open standards environment, specifically Java 2 Enterprise Edition (J2EE).

The customer also plans on using Rational XDE Modeler to develop new retail applications, which would operate using customer data from Conforama's Oracle and Informix platforms. These applications would be predominately used for back-office functions, such as backstock data tracking or invoice processing.

Benefits of the Solution:

While this solution is still in its initial stages of development, Conforama is confident that by integrating and migrating its systems to a centralized infrastructure, the organization will experience a significant reduction in its overall information technology (IT) costs. This savings will be generated by having removed the need to operate several development applications on a variety of platforms, reducing overall license fees.

Leveraging the J2EE capabilities of the IBM Rational solution will establish further savings. By using an openstandards-based platform for its software integration, Conforama can centralize its application environment, while leveraging its existing investment of heterogeneous servers. Conforama also expects this solution to increase the overall productivity of its sales force, which will be able to spend more time with customers rather than waiting for applications to initialize. The integrated nature of the solution will also provide the store employees with more accurate backstock information, improving customer satisfaction.

Additional benefits to this solution include:

- Easier version management
- Improved efficiency for Conforama's developers
- Reduced application development time.