

SAP Customer Success Story Consumer Products



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Susan VonHoven, Chief Knowledge Officer, Brown-Forman

AT A GLANCE

Summary

Brown-Forman, a diversified U.S.-based producer and marketer of high-quality consumer products, worked with SAP® Consulting to implement the SAP NetWeaver™ platform and the SAP Enterprise Portal component to support enhanced distributor and employee communications and business processes.

Web Site

www.brown-forman.com

Key Challenges

- Provide employees role-based access to “one version of truth”
- Automate information exchange with distributors
- Gain in-house expertise about portal technology and knowledge management

Project Objectives

- Develop robust enterprise portal to support employees and distributors
- Become self-sufficient to deploy and support portal
- Deliver project on time and within budget

Solutions and Services

SAP NetWeaver with SAP Enterprise Portal and its knowledge management capability; SAP Web Application Server component; and integration with SAP Business Intelligence component

Why SAP Solution

- Solution enabled employees and distributors to save time, ultimately reducing communication and business process costs.

- SAP Consulting provided comprehensive and competitive bid that addressed Brown-Forman’s key requirements.
- SAP consultants delivered knowledge and expertise that empowered Brown-Forman employees to take ownership of the portal.

Implementation Highlight

Employee portal successfully launched on time and within budget

Key Benefits

- Real-time, Web-based access for thousands of employees
- Annual savings of over \$100,000 by eliminating the need to develop new Web sites
- Empowerment of Brown-Forman employees via knowledge transfer to roll out all-employee portal and to deploy portal for distributors

Implementation Partner

SAP Consulting

Existing Environment

- SAP R/3® software (available now in the mySAP™ ERP solution)
- SAP Business Intelligence
- mySAP Financials (available now in the mySAP ERP Financials solution)
- SAP Advanced Planning & Optimization (SAP APO) component
- mySAP Human Resources (available now in the mySAP ERP Human Capital Management solution)

Hardware

Sun and Compaq servers

Operating System

Microsoft Windows 2003

BROWN-FORMAN

SAP NetWeaver™ and SAP® Consulting Help Brown-Forman Build a Platform for Information Sharing

When Brown-Forman sought to enhance communications and business processes for its employees, it chose the SAP NetWeaver™ platform and the SAP® Enterprise Portal component. Working with SAP Consulting, Brown-Forman realized an on-time, on-budget, high-quality implementation and future self-sufficiency through knowledge transfer.

Brown-Forman, with more than \$2.3 billion in sales for fiscal 2003 and a staff of 6,700 worldwide, is one of the leading producers and marketers of distilled spirits and wine in the United States. The company, based in Louisville, Ky., also makes housewares, collectibles, and luggage. Among its well-known brands are Southern Comfort, Early Times, Canadian Mist, Jack Daniel’s, Fetzer wines, Lenox china, and Hartmann luggage.

Providing Employees with Needed Information

Brown-Forman’s knowledge workers and production employees were suffering from information overload – there was too much information in too many places, and it was not organized in ways that enabled employees to find it. “Any time anyone in the company had information to share, they’d build their own Web site. It got to the point where we had 60 internal Web sites. This resulted in redundancies and no single ownership of information. Having duplicate information in multiple places took up storage resources, proved inefficient for employees, and resulted in inaccurate information,” explains Susan VonHoven, Brown-Forman’s chief knowledge officer.

VonHoven knew an enterprise portal would provide the company's employees with easy access to a variety of business applications and information. As a satisfied SAP customer – SAP R/3® software (available today in mySAP™ ERP) was implemented in 1998 and other SAP solutions were subsequently deployed – it was natural for Brown-Forman to evaluate the SAP NetWeaver platform and the SAP Enterprise Portal component. “The main portion of our infrastructure is built on SAP software, and while we do not automatically choose SAP for every need, we always evaluate the company's offerings when we are looking for new functionality,” says VonHoven.

SAP Software Fits the Bill

Brown-Forman chose the SAP NetWeaver platform and the SAP Enterprise Portal component because of the proven ability to enhance communications and reduce costs for organizations.

When Brown-Forman implemented its portal, it also built a data warehouse using the SAP Business Intelligence component of SAP NetWeaver. SAP Business Intelligence enables the company to collect and integrate data from a variety of sources, which its employees can then analyze for insights.

“With the data warehouse, our goal is to provide employees with access to the same data and one version of the truth,” says Rick Hopkins, Brown-Forman's manager of software architecture. “All of our people are now looking at the same numbers. That's a huge benefit. We can see results the next day, each and every day, so we can make faster decisions.”

Creating Structure with Knowledge Management

The company also took advantage of the portal's integrated knowledge management capability. “We are using the knowledge management tools to create structure for all the information that had been scattered throughout the company on various Web sites and in a number of repositories. By using the knowledge management capability to categorize, organize, and deliver information in logical ways, we are making the portal a platform for any and all types of company information,” explains VonHoven.

Role-Based Access to Information

Combining the portal with SAP Business Information Warehouse (a component of SAP Business Intelligence) will allow Brown-Forman to provide its employees with role-based access to information. The company can tailor what each user sees in the portal to his or her responsibilities and needs. For example, an executive such as Hopkins gets information that's suited to him as an employee and as a member of the technology and leadership teams. “It filters out the noise,” he explains.

VonHoven continues, “The portal is helping our employees to work efficiently. They can find information more easily, and the single sign-on capability that we're implementing makes it simple for them to manage passwords. We're attempting to create

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Susan VonHoven, Chief Knowledge Officer, Brown-Forman

an environment in which employees do not need to understand how multiple applications work. The portal helps us to make the underlying applications invisible to our personnel. Over time, this will help us orient and train new employees.”

Streamlined Processes and Resource Usage

Consolidating data through SAP Business Intelligence is also allowing Brown-Forman to sweep away obsolete internal repositories and Web pages. In addition, Brown-Forman has been able to streamline its information storage and content creation. “Many of our internal Web sites were built on Lotus Notes and we anticipate a decline in the development of Lotus Notes Web-enabled databases. We were previously building 10 to 12 Web sites per year at a cost of \$10,000 to \$20,000. The portal has allowed us to curb that expense. It's also much simpler for our employees to share information with others because we've cut out the Web content development phase,” says VonHoven.

Consultants Provide Needed Expertise

According to Hopkins, the company chose to work with SAP Consulting for a variety of reasons. “Because we were using SAP software, we wanted to establish a strong partnership for this and future engagements. We also knew that SAP would provide the best resources, skill-wise, for SAP NetWeaver and the portal

“SAP consultants we worked with provided true consulting by serving in an advisory role and transferring their knowledge so customers can become self-sufficient.”

Rick Hopkins, Manager of Software Architecture, Brown-Forman

software. SAP Consulting provided a comprehensive and competitive bid because they took the time to understand exactly what we wanted to do. While consultants were here, we expected them to spend a significant portion of their time on knowledge transfer so that at the end of the engagement, our resources would be self-sufficient and could proceed without the need for additional consulting. We wanted to take ownership of the portal and needed to work with consultants who could empower us to do so.”

To take advantage of all the capabilities SAP NetWeaver offers, customers can benefit from the insight SAP provides on how to best use them. As VonHoven explains, “We had no internal players with much portal knowledge. SAP Consulting helped us come up the learning curve quickly by transferring knowledge. By the same token, the knowledge management capability is relatively new for Brown-Forman. We knew what we wanted to accomplish with it, but had no idea how to go about it. SAP Consulting supplied extensive information about the knowledge management concept and how to actually make it work in an enterprise setting.

“The consultants mentored our employees and successfully transferred the knowledge that enabled Brown-Forman employees to execute the go-live of the all-employee portal with minimal SAP Consulting involvement,” continues VonHoven.

“What sets SAP Consulting apart is their level of involvement. When the consultants left the site, they didn’t leave the project – they were still answering questions and serving as part of an extended team. They could fall back on the internal SAP network – the ‘big brain’ – to increase their own expertise when they ran into issues. So, for instance, although we had one knowledge management person on-site, that person had the entire SAP network to call upon,” explains Hopkins.

“SAP consultants are able to draw on their extensive experience helping a variety of customers implement SAP NetWeaver and its components. We were able to leverage these insights to identify potential issues upfront and add them to the overall game plan rather than being in reaction mode all the time. At the same time, when we needed to react, SAP consultants were able to rally their resources to help us respond appropriately,” says Hopkins.

Future Plans for Enhancements

Now available to all employees, the Brown-Forman portal has met the company’s expectations. As Hopkins explains, “With SAP NetWeaver and the enterprise portal, we’ve set a rock-solid foundation from an architecture and knowledge-based perspective, and we now have the tools and expertise to move forward and continue to grow it over the next 12 to 18 months.”

VonHoven adds, “The employee portal serves as a platform for providing our employees with a single source of accurate and up-to-date information.”

Going forward, Brown-Forman also plans to build more portal views to further tailor its systems to the needs of its users. SAP NetWeaver gives the company that flexibility, Hopkins says. “We’ll ask the sales representatives, ‘What do you need in your portal to make you most efficient?’ They might need the ability to instant message with a distributor or to see a distributor’s order status. Through the portal, we’ll be able to provide them with those capabilities.”

VonHoven says, "We plan to expand the portal to include supply chain management and sales and marketing information, and increase the use of the all-employee portal by implementing the SAP Employee Self-Service application. We'll also make the content available to our employees regardless of where they are by converting the portal to an extranet instead of using it only as an intranet. And we will extend the portal to some of our distributors in early 2005 so that we can collaborate more closely with them," continues VonHoven.

SAP Consultants Define "Consulting"

Hopkins concludes, "When companies are implementing new technologies, they sometimes operate under the assumption that they can save money by going with the lowest-cost provider. In fact, it may end up being more expensive with the lowest-cost provider because the project may take longer. While there is no way for me to now validate whether we would have saved money by going with another consulting firm, based on my own experience managing a variety of technology projects, working with SAP Consulting was a wise decision. I would recommend them to any other company that seeks to deliver a quality project on time and within budget. They helped us manage the project scope and stay within the bounds of the original contract. The SAP consultants we worked with provided true consulting by serving in an advisory role and transferring their knowledge so customers can become self-sufficient."