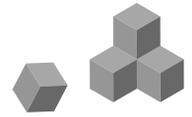


# Cascades integrates and standardizes data for Just-in-Time operation



## Case study

1

standard way to transfer information between SAP and external applications

20k

daily transactions prove scalability

65

plants using new interfaces



## Challenge

Cascades' IT department is implementing SAP R/3 enterprise resource planning (ERP) applications at dozens of mills, plants, and paper manufacturing facilities. It's part of an enterprise-wide strategy to reengineer financials, procurement, purchasing, production planning, warehouse management, plant maintenance, and other essential business functions.

One significant challenge in this multi-year SAP deployment involves tying its already existing infrastructure to this new and evolving SAP environment. Cascades realized that it needed integration technology to monitor shop floor equipment as well as move data, messages, and transactions seamlessly across this complex infrastructure.

Cascades evaluated integration technology from SAP, Microsoft, and Information Builders (ibi). It preferred the ibi data platform because of its easy connectivity with its AS/400 system.

"Microsoft BizTalk couldn't integrate with the AS/400 as well as [ibi's data platform] could, and the SAP solution was too expensive and complex to implement," says Martin Gauthier, technology coordinator at Cascades. "ibi showed us how we could set up interfaces to transfer messages, integrate legacy systems, and trigger actions among multiple systems. Today, iWay [part of ibi's data platform] is integrated into our core processes. It gives us real-time data about the operation. Without it, we would not be able to integrate legacy application information with SAP information, and we would lack total visibility into production, distribution, finance, and other business processes."

The Cascades Tissue Group uses GE Proficy Plant Applications to monitor machinery and gather statistics about physical conditions in the plants. Sensors on the equipment gather data about temperature, humidity, and other operating conditions that affect the quality of the finished products. The IT department uses ibi's data platform to obtain log files of this information and send those files to a central data center for processing.

Equipment sensors monitor variables within the production process and consolidate the results for offline analysis. "Our sensors detect slight variations in the production

## Cascades

### Industry: Manufacturing

Founded in 1964, Cascades produces, converts, and markets packaging and tissue products that are composed mainly of recycled fibers. Cascades employs more than 12,000 people in more than 100 production units in North America and Europe.

With its proven management philosophy, half a century of experience in recycling, and continuous efforts in research and development as driving forces, Cascades continues to deliver innovative products on which its customers rely.



process, and we must make sure that these parameters are in an acceptable range,” says Gauthier. “People on the shop floor need this information to monitor production. We use iWay [part of ibi’s data platform] to send this information from Proficy to a reporting tool that produces operational reports.”

» «[Without ibi], we would not be able to integrate legacy application information with SAP information, and we would lack total visibility into production, distribution, finance, and other business processes.»

Martin Gauthier, Technology Coordinator, Cascades

### Technology used

- > Omni
- > Professional Services

## Solution

The success of this first implementation motivated Gauthier and his team to also use ibi’s data platform to transfer data in and out of SAP as well. Implementing SAP is an important part of Cascades’ strategy to become a just-in-time manufacturing operation that depends on real-time information. With mills spread throughout Europe and North America it has always been difficult to consolidate information and share it with headquarters. SAP applications are gradually uniting this geographically diverse operation to give managers enterprise-wide visibility into procurement, production, shipping, planning, and other manufacturing functions.

These new ERP applications must run in conjunction with legacy AS/400 systems, currently used to run payroll, execute plant-floor processes, purchase raw materials, coordinate activities with logistics suppliers, order spare parts, and conduct specialized planning and forecasting exercises. Most of the legacy data is stored in an IBM DB2/400 database. Additional data is maintained in Microsoft SQL Server for production execution and planning. “We need to keep our old systems running while we gradually standardize on the new SAP modules,” Gauthier says. “We have implemented SAP at some plants, but the old enterprise applications must work in parallel. iWay [part of ibi’s data platform] plays a central role as a standard integration platform for these activities.”

The team deployed the SAP interfaces in two phases. In Phase 1, they created secure FTP channels to move legacy data into a multichannel architecture. These interfaces enabled plants to send and receive data between a legacy inventory system, a legacy production manufacturing system, and two SAP modules: SAP Order Management and SAP Planning. “ibi helped us design a framework for passing files from one FTP folder to another,” says Eric Mayrand, a software development manager at Cascades. “The ibi consultants taught us to use their tools and they gave us premium support whenever we encountered problems.”

As time went on, Mayrand and his colleagues decided they needed better recovery techniques and greater visibility into these transactions. To achieve these more robust capabilities, they used iWay [part of ibi’s data platform] to upgrade to a more traditional queuing technology.

“We had a short time frame so we decided to go with the FTP solution initially,” explains Mayrand. “This deployment demonstrated that the ibi platform was stable and easy to use. The FTP interfaces worked adequately, but as traffic increased we decided to replace these interfaces with a message queuing system.”

## Benefits

As Mayrand and the team soon learned, ibi data platform makes it easy to replace



one transport with another, providing “plug-and-play” interchange among technology assets. Out-of-the-box integration capabilities allow seamless access to any application or data store. A built-in enterprise service bus enables the creation, composition, and management of many types of middleware services, whether invoked as web services or through other interfaces.

This flexibility enabled Cascades to use FTP at the outset, then later use a Microsoft service bus to take advantage of advanced capabilities for event-driven integration and B2B interaction management.

Cascades didn’t have to change the business orchestration logic. They simply streamlined it with an alternate transport mechanism based on Microsoft Message Queue (MQ) services. As of this writing, 15 plants are live with the new ibi data platform interfaces. “We send about 20,000 daily transactions through iWay [part of ibi’s data platform],” says Daniel Chouinard, an IT specialist at Cascades. “iWay [part of ibi’s data platform] scales well and performs well. We have it installed on three servers, and we can expand it as necessary.”

Once SAP is fully implemented, between 60 and 65 plants will use these new ibi data platform interfaces. In addition, workers at the head office are starting to use ibi to exchange invoice data with suppliers and integrate the results with the SAP finance module. “Thanks to iWay [part of ibi’s data platform], we have implemented SAP without having to change our existing applications,” says Mayrand. “We can make a smooth transition by keeping our new and old applications running in tandem. When a new mill goes live, they use iWay [part of ibi’s data platform] to manage the closure of an old system, preserving transactions in the middleware.”

➤ **“Previously, general ledger information was gathered at the end of each month. Now managers can track sales and production continuously. iWay [part of ibi’s data platform] helps us exchange the data, so managers and financial officers are instantly apprised of the status of the operation.”**

**Martin Gauthier, Technology Coordinator, Cascades**

As Cascades has learned, standardizing on one general-purpose middleware environment makes it easier to develop and support new interfaces, since reusability ensures economies of scale. “We have one standard way to transfer information between SAP and external applications,” Mayrand says. “iWay [part of ibi’s data platform] blends the data so it appears as if it all comes from the same system.”



In keeping with its just-in-time production strategy, the new ERP system boosts efficiency by reducing in-process inventory and associated carrying costs. Cascades uses real-time information from ibi's data platform to keep its production equipment running optimally, monitor the quality of its finished goods, improve forecasting, and remove waste from the supply chain — ensuring prompt and accurate production and delivery of its products to customers.

“Plant managers can take action right away, rather than the next day or the next month,” says Mayrand. “They also have a more accurate, real-time view of costs. Previously, general ledger information was gathered at the end of each month. Now managers can track sales and production continuously. iWay [part of ibi's data platform] helps us exchange the data, so managers and financial officers are instantly apprised of the status of the operation.”

## About ibi

ibi is a data and analytics software company that embeds intelligence into — everything. From the beginning, ibi has known the importance of data and insights to make better decisions. We help organizations get their complex and disconnected data in order, so they can build, embed, and automate intelligence into everything they do. By preparing organizations for the future and turning them into builders — information builders — everyone can use enterprise trusted data at scale to drive their growth. Whether our customers use pre-built applications or build their own solutions for their data and analytics challenges, ibi powers their innovation and reinvention. ibi's open platform and industry-specific building blocks accelerate speed to market, improve operational efficiency, and enhance their customers' experience.

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