CASE STUDY
B & B Italia

Challenge
> Capture production information in real-time to keep managers informed on the status of customer orders
> Reduce internal administration, improve internal communications
> Automate delivery status information
> Make key performance information in diverse production systems available across the company

Solution
> Implement the PRESENCE platform.
> Send email alerts based on key production delivery criteria
> Generate status reports of current situation
> Automate delivery status information

Benefits
> Customer account managers are informed of precise order delivery status
> Reduced internal administration costs
> Automated information distribution throughout the company

Furniture Giant Makes Customers More Comfortable With PRESENCE

B&B Italia, the leading contract and home furnishings design house in Italy, has implemented the PRESENCE Codeless Development Platform, and now benefits from responsive, customer-focused business processes that keep costs low and service satisfaction high.

A flair for style

B&B Italia has a second-to-none reputation for style, innovation and creativity in furniture design and manufacture. The contract division has furnished prestigious hotels, clubs, restaurants and ships worldwide, while the home furnishings division sells through distributors and retail stores, with outlets throughout Italy and major stores in Milan and London. B&B Italia (B&B) has four manufacturing plants in northern Italy, employs 500 people and has a turnover of more than €150 million.

A typical B&B contract involves literally thousands of bespoke furnishings: for example, a current cruise liner contract covers five ships with 1,390 cabins each, each one of which will be different. Managing the production workflow for such large contracts is essential, and it is vital to keep customers informed of any delays or changes to delivery schedules. Additionally, B&B faces the challenge of handling a high volume of complex invoicing and delivery documentation. Before the implementation of the PRESENCE solution, B&B lacked the internal cohesion necessary for fast and efficient process management.

Enrico Ceci, Information Technology Director at B&B, explains: "With no central database to access, if one department needed information from another, the only way to obtain it was by telephone. Customers would often be kept on hold while we tried to source information, and that was simply not acceptable."

A clearer view

B&B uses PROj enterprise resource planning (ERP) software from Gruppo Pro, which runs on IBM's iSeries platform. The PROj software supports production, invoicing, sales order processing, planning and more. B&B set out to extract the information held in PROj and use it to drive its business processes. For example, if raw materials were to arrive late, the company wanted this information to be distributed to management, so that production sequences could be changed and customers informed of the delay.

"What we lacked was a system that could alert us to certain situations," says Ceci. "We produce furniture to order, rather than for stock, so any unforeseen delay in the supply chain or in production will always affect a customer. It was therefore essential to improve our visibility of information, so that we would know about delays as early as possible."

PRESENCE Overview

PRESENCE is a comprehensive business integration platform that enables an organization to better run, manage and optimize its business. A proven solution for organizations looking to integrate people, systems, data and business processes. PRESENCE allows companies to reduce complexity, improve efficiency and realize maximum value from existing IT assets, directly improving corporate responsiveness, efficiency, and competitiveness.

Our business integration platform is a single, unified, vendor-neutral application that employs a graphical environment to rapidly develop and deploy solutions with little or no programming.

Build composite applications, manage, integrate and automate business processes (BPM) and create Business Activity Monitoring (BAM) initiatives.

PRESENCE monitors a company's key business rules, integrating structured and unstructured data from diverse application databases – non-invasively. Then automatically notifies customers, vendors and employees by email or fax, automatically updates data between applications, updates websites, generates reports or documents, creates balanced scorecards, dashboards and more.

Keeping customers in the picture

To meet the challenge, B&B has implemented PRESENCE, which monitors all production systems, checking for variations against production delivery schedules, and immediately notifying managers by email where there is a change.

Managers simply enter the target delivery date for a given raw material, such as fabric for chairs, into PRESENCE. The software then monitors the production systems for the actual delivery date. If the delivery deadline passes and no fabric has been received, then PRESENCE automatically sends an email alert to the relevant manager.

"With PRESENCE, the Customer Service department knows immediately if there is any risk of the target delivery date for the finished goods being missed, because the software sends an alert," says Ceci. "No longer do we rely on telephone calls between departments to find out the latest situation, PRESENCE sends an email automatically. Customer Service then proactively contacts the customer to keep him informed."

Start small, grow fast

B&B uses PRESENCE to monitor production systems for goods deliveries, and accounting systems for payment notification. Incoming payments to the accounting systems are monitored, and the software generates email alerts when payments are late, which automates credit control processes to a high degree.

Ceci comments, "At the moment, PRESENCE is used solely to monitor production or to notify the accounts department of a freeze on a particular customer's credit. We can use that information to suspend production until the account is settled.

"PRESENCE reduces our business risk by alerting us to situations before they become serious, which is a valuable business advantage. We aim to extend the coverage of PRESENCE throughout B&B Italia, to automate our business processes as far as possible."

Cost-effective and non-intrusive

PRESENCE did not require any changes to be made to B&B's ERP system, and was implemented without any major programming costs. It therefore enabled Enrico Ceci to deliver a much-needed boost to process management at lower risk, in a shorter timescale, and at lower cost than a custom-built solution.
"Not only was PRESENCE more powerful, it was also more cost-effective than an in-house system would have been. It delivers alerts and reports direct to users' desktops, and has already had a dramatic effect on the quality of our customer service. With PRESENCE, our customers are better informed and we are more responsive to their needs – we are delighted," concludes Ceci.