CASE STUDY

NSK Steering Systems

Challenge
Detection of out-of-process conditions in order to improve just-in-time efficiency and customer service

Solution
NSK implemented the PRESENCE Codeless Development Platform to detect significant events across multiple applications and deliver immediate alerts linked to an escalating workflow according to the urgency of the process step.

Benefits
> Improved control.
> Quicker response.
> Shortened inventory/logistical chains.
> Initiating business processes.
> Automating systems which were previously too labour-intensive to monitor.

"We selected PRESENCE to help us with control and provide quick response, and we are absolutely delighted by the results."

NSK Steering Systems Accelerate With PRESENCE

Leading steering systems manufacturer NSK Steering Systems Europe has implemented the PRESENCE platform. Not only does PRESENCE offer detailed business control by delivering instant exception alert emails, but the company is also using PRESENCE to manage workflow for enhanced customer service and faster times to market.

Steering the best course
NSK Steering Systems Europe (NSSE) is a leading supplier to the auto industry, manufacturing a large range of manual and electronic power assisted steering columns. The company is part of NSK, a global business that specialises in bearings, and both the group and NSK Steering Systems are headquartered in Japan. The NSSE business itself has headquarters in Coventry, manufacturing in Peterlee, County Durham, and sales offices in Milan, Paris and Stuttgart.

The automotive business is intensely competitive, and there is constant pressure to innovate, shorten the inventory/logistics chain and reduce costs while providing a faster service and a higher-quality product. To meet these demands, NSK chose to implement the PRESENCE Codeless Development Platform.

Jon Dobson, IT Manager, reports: "Our systems such as design, inventory, manufacturing and logistics are highly interdependent, with very short just-in-time service level agreements with our customers. We selected PRESENCE to help us with control and provide quick response, and we are absolutely delighted with the results."

In the driving seat
NSK has built up its IT infrastructure over an extended period, adding processes and systems as the need arose. MAPICS, the core ERP application running on an IBM iSeries, manages a centralised database of finished products and components, including pricing, location, stock levels and logistics. Various additional specialist solutions, such as CAD systems, reside on diverse platforms, too.

The initial proposal to implement PRESENCE was to detect out-of-process conditions and deliver immediate email alerts to users. This solved critical conditions, for example where stock levels fell below target or where cost accounting did not correspond with the purchasing department's figures.

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.

"We run a near-24/7 operation, and there are thousands of stock components, prices and products. Before PRESENCE, keeping a track of these as part of the business process was almost impossible. Even with comprehensive reporting, we were drowning in a sea of paper. Now, for any exception, PRESENCE sends an immediate email, includes the details of the problem, and we're on top of it," comments Jon Dobson. "We're saving time, money and heartache."

"However, PRESENCE is much, much more powerful than that. We escalate alerts if there is no action, and we use PRESENCE to manage our workflow. PRESENCE gives NSK a business workflow management advantage which leads directly to competitive advantage."

Smoothing business traffic

The first step towards business workflow management using PRESENCE was to consider what happened when users received alert emails.

"We initially proposed sending a series of email alerts, until the alert condition was resolved. Unfortunately, seen from the recipient's point of view this can become spam. Sending an alert does not guarantee that action will be taken. So we have configured PRESENCE to send additional alerts to a supervisor, and even senior management, if the original alert condition is not resolved after a specific time or number of alerts. In effect, PRESENCE escalates," says Jon Dobson.

PRESENCE has opened up a new realm of business workflow management opportunities for NSK. It can be used to drive any process - including a process where there is no exception alert, purely a notification that a particular process is complete.

For example, supplier negotiations will result in a new price agreement. PRESENCE can notify the cost accounting department that there are new contract prices available to populate the component cost database. Subsequently, PRESENCE can notify cost engineers of the new supplier costs, which may influence component selection, and so-on. At every stage, if no action is taken, PRESENCE can escalate the request according to the agreed urgency and importance of the process step.

Comments Jon Dobson, "Using PRESENCE, we can invoke programs and processes between systems that it would otherwise be too costly or difficult to manage. For alerts, which report on exceptions, and notifications, which report on business processes, we are in a position to automate systems that would otherwise be too labour-intensive to monitor. And bear in mind that we can use the alert-on-alert trick with inter-program alerts, too. It's very powerful. With PRESENCE, NSK is saving cost and delivering results way beyond our expectations. I should be on commission!"