



Body Shop keeps its business in shape with SAP and IBM.

US franchise of skin and hair care retailer, The Body Shop International Plc, is making better-informed decisions thanks to its new SAP R/3 solution running on the IBM @server iSeries. Founded in 1976, The Body Shop operates in 47 countries, with over 1,500 outlets. The Body Shop's US operation has 3,000 employees during peak periods and a core staff of 261 people at headquarters in North Carolina and California. The Body Shop US wanted to replace its original IT infrastructure. It required a system that would speed up current business operations at the back end and that was capable of handling existing business information. The Body Shop also wanted a solution that would be scalable to meet the needs of planned future growth within the company.

From three possible ERP systems, The Body Shop chose SAP R/3 Human Resources and Finance modules and the industry solution IS-Retail, running on two iSeries servers with DB2 database. Andrea Alvey, Vice President of Supply Chain and Information Technology for The Body Shop says, "The Body Shop's IBM and SAP solution supports some

very important day-to-day business operations, including finance, accounting, and human resources. With the IBM and SAP solution The Body Shop is able to view data from a single source. This provides us with accurate data as it is collected into one master source and is no longer dispersed over different systems."

Full-body makeover

The solution created for The Body Shop US involved a complete overhaul of the company's existing infrastructure. Gary Thomas, Director of Development at The Body Shop US, comments, "Although the initial stages were challenging, due to the extensive changes we needed to make to our existing IT system, once we had the right applications in place, the rest of the implementation was carried out much more smoothly."

Industry	Retail
Application	SAP R/3
Software	SAP R/3 FI, HR and IS-Retail
Hardware	iSeries

"Our SAP solution enables management to take faster and better decisions, thus helping us to be more efficient and ultimately, more successful."

Andrea Alvey, Vice President of Supply Chain and Information Technology



Andrea Alvey adds: "SAP is a large system and there is a learning curve involved for new users. What SAP has offered The Body Shop US, is that it has forced structure on the organization where it did not previously exist, enabling us to optimize our business processes. This has created a new management culture, which is not always easy on a company as it drives change. Strategically however, this change is for the better. SAP is an ERP solution, which is what we need; all the data is on one shared system and it is, above all else, accurate."

Integrated solutions

The principal benefit of the completed solution is that it provides the company with excellent data reliability, by integrating the whole of The Body Shop US's information into one centralized solution. Andrea Alvey comments, "The centralized system enables our 150 active users to get the information they need from one source, meaning they can carry out their tasks accurately and efficiently."

The reliability and stability of the iSeries servers offer a seamless operation. The integration of the OS/400 operating system with the DB2/400 database offers a stable foundation for any application. With a 99.94% availability it ensures that users can rely on the fact that updated data is available when they need it. Andrea Alvey points out: "The more reliable information offered by our integrated solution means management can make better informed decisions taking us on a positive route into the future."

IS-Retail on iSeries for fast results

The SAP industry solution IS-Retail is the retail-specific software for handling financial and logistical issues. Functions such as ordering inventory, earmarking it for individual stores, packing and shipping orders, processing returns, making purchasing decisions, and processing account payable and receivable are all based on the same shared data to create a truly integrated information base.

The speed of transaction processing has increased significantly since implementation of the iSeries servers. Gary Thomas says, "At peak times, each of our stores is now turning over an average of more than 460 transactions per day. This improves the speed with which sales reports can be collated and distributed to management improving managerial decision-making processes. IS-Retail is handling all our financial and logistics aspects. By uploading sales data from stores IS-Retail can automate behind-the-scenes decisions. This means that functions such as ordering inventory, packing and shipping orders and making purchasing decisions are all based on the same shared data, which is a great benefit to management."

Great database support

To handle its expanding data, The Body Shop US needs its database to run on a powerful IT infrastructure. For this reason, it chose to complement its SAP application with IBM hardware and software. The OS/400 operating system with the dynamic DB2 database, coupled with the strength of the hardware design of the iSeries, provides a robust solution for great IT support. Gary Thomas explains, "The Body Shop currently has a database of 500 GB, so it requires a robust solution to support it. With the iSeries we have the support we need for now and we believe for our expansion into the future."

Great-looking future

The Body Shop now plans to make use of the logical partitioning (LPAR) feature of iSeries. LPAR will enable The Body Shop US to run a number of separated systems on a single machine, so it has increased support for adding further applications in the future without the need to expand a number of systems. Andrea Alvey concludes, "The SAP and IBM solution offers The Body Shop US great future potential; as we grow we can be confident that our architecture provides the IT infrastructure that will enable us to fulfill our goals."



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