

Eclipse and WeigleWilczek improve IT processes for the City of Stuttgart

WEIGLEWILCZEK
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Meeting IT requirements is always a challenge, even in a well-organized enterprise. Add to this the complex hardware and software approval processes of a state capital and the situation becomes even more demanding.

To simplify those approval processes and to find the right solution for their requirements, the City of Stuttgart, Germany turned to Open Source and to IT service provider WeigleWilczek and Eclipse.

Stuttgart, the capital of German federal state Baden-Württemberg, has approximately 600,000 inhabitants. The municipal administration employs 12,000 people, more than half of whom use a computer for work. All users within the City's IT infrastructure send their procurement proposals to one of 17 IT coordinators, who are responsible for the distribution of hardware, software and consulting services. In the past, employees would fill in paper applications and submit those to the city's IT department. But this procedure needed to be replaced by a more efficient document-based workflow system that still took into consideration an IT budget of only 5.5 million euros.

While researching suitable solutions, the City of Stuttgart came across an application called Open IT, by software provider WeigleWilczek GmbH. Based on Eclipse RCP, JBoss and PostgreSQL, this workflow software provides decision support for the public sector, breaking down complex tasks into logical sub-steps.

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Open IT is focused on improving administrative processes by providing insight and by converting existing papers documents into electronic document files.

“With Open IT we could significantly speed up the approval process,” says Walter Pfeifer, IT project manager for the City of Stuttgart. “If someone in the municipal administration needs something he or she will contact one of our IT coordinators. Using Open IT, the coordinator will then select the requested product or support service from the database. Once the selection is made, an electronic workflow is kicked into motion, during which the persons in charge can add their comments. Thanks to Eclipse RCP, the entire procedure is now completely intuitive and very easy to use. In the past, an application process could take three to four weeks; now it only takes two to three days.”

WeigleWilczek GmbH used Eclipse RCP to develop a user-oriented interface that allows the City of Stuttgart to view every document and decision individually.



“Our customers told us that they felt immediately comfortable with the RCP-based interface, just like using a familiar product,” explains Jörn Weigle, managing director of WeigleWilczek and project manager of the Open IT project. “The application’s response time is incredibly fast, reliable and robust. The users particularly welcomed the intelligent help system, and the integrated tab technology provides a familiar navigation to those who have already worked with Lotus Notes.”

WeigleWilczek used Eclipse RCP to provide different user audiences with special views and customizable perspectives, as well as filtering and classification functionality. Moreover, Eclipse allows users to save their current status at shut down so that they can access it the next time they open the application.

Eclipse RCP allows Open IT to offer a graphical user interface complete with user-specific access rights. Each user can only access one clearly-defined view of the relevant document and decision. If necessary, each decision can be traced down to its origin using the advanced electronic signature. According to Weigle, expandability is another big benefit of Eclipse RCP. WeigleWilczek GmbH and the City of Stuttgart can quickly make changes and introduce new versions with maximum transparency for the end user.

The purpose of Open IT is to support decision makers in public

administrations, Weigle explains. “An application may be really powerful, but without intuitive controls it is useless. We were able to develop a professional front end with Eclipse that is tailor made but that offers the same user experience as standard software. This way, we could implement all the functionalities the City of Stuttgart needed without requiring a lengthy training and induction period – which is a weakness of so many systems.”

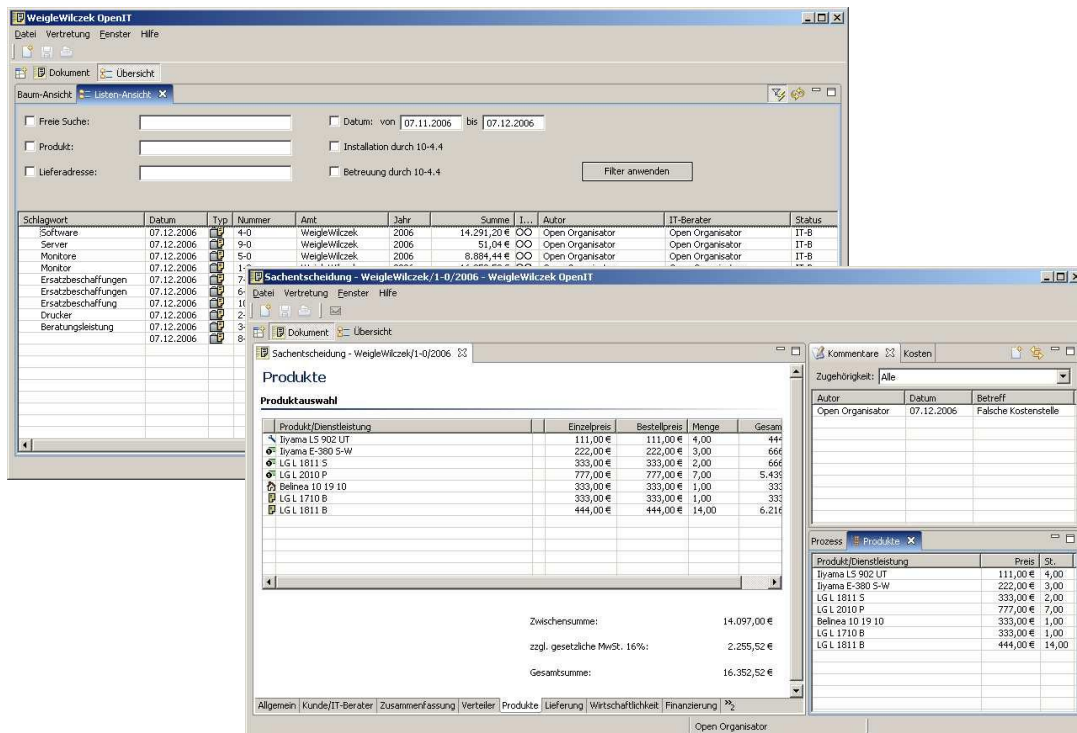
Germany’s SAGA Standards – the country’s regulations for eGovernment applications – presented another challenge. These standards lay down rules for compliant databases, middleware and front-ends; Open IT needed to comply. “The standards mainly concern web applications but

some regulations apply to rich clients as well,” Weigle explains. “Our architecture is based on J2EE, and an Open Source database like PostgreSQL ensures compliancy, while RCP is used as the front end.”

In the next phase of their co-operation, WeigleWilczek GmbH and the City of Stuttgart will develop tools for reporting and analysis. For this, WeigleWilczek is currently evaluating the capabilities of the Eclipse BIRT (Business Intelligence and Reporting Tools) project and how it can be used to provide more insight for Stuttgart’s municipal management. With this system the City’s financial controllers and audit officers will be able to systematically analyze data by procurement practice and history.

BIRT already includes all core reporting functionalities like report design, data access and scripting.

The Open IT capabilities are in great demand and the customer actively promotes the deployment of future Open Source solutions. “The cost-benefit ratio of Open Source is impressive and the system is really robust,” Pfeifer says. “We are planning to use Open Source for other administrative procedures in different municipal departments in Stuttgart. So far we have not encountered any problems at all and at the same time we have set up some new systems that improved our IT processes considerably.”



Decision view and structure of an application form in Open IT

Information Source from WeigleWilczek

(http://www.weiglewilczek.com/fileadmin/Publications/Artikel_Open_IT_LHS_Eclipse.pdf) on 9/23/2010.