

CASE STUDY



Easing Acquisition Pain by Streamlining Diverse and Interdependent Processes

ABB aligns disparate business processes using the iGrafx platform, and greatly streamlines operations as a result.

The Story

Asea Brown Boveri—better known around the world as ABB—is a Netherlands-based firm that develops technology for companies in specific industrial sectors. The company operates through two divisions: Power Technologies, which supplies a broad range of systems and services to the energy and utilities sector and to industrial clients; and Automation Technologies, which creates an extensive array of drive-technology systems—motors and controllers, for example. ABB employs approximately 139,000 people in 100 countries.

The Challenge

Enjoying considerable success and, in recent years, having acquired a number of companies, ABB found itself experiencing growing pains. The pain was particularly apparent where business processes were concerned. This was due to the fact that each firm that ABB had acquired had brought with it its own processes. When integrating 21 separate legacy systems, ABB's information network was feeling the strain.

The Solution

Recognizing that it couldn't optimize operations until it was able to control and synchronize its business processes, ABB set out to find a solution that would enable the company to do that. ABB chose the iGrafx Modelling and Platform.

"All these different systems have now been combined into a single, comprehensive business information network—one that's readily available to everyone who needs to access it," says John Wilhelm, Process Manager for the Business Support Division at ABB's Automation Technologies. Wilhelm is chair of the consultative committee set up to streamline ABB's processes.



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*-John Wilhelm
Process Manager
Automation Technologies
BA-ATLV, ABB*

“It was a huge project,” Wilhelm reflects. “It kept us busy for a year and a half. We tackled quite a number of issues—many of them relating to the functionality of our systems. It became apparent that quite a few changes were needed in the overall process chain, and in particular, at the interfaces within the enterprise resource planning (ERP) application and the organization itself. We knew that in implementing these changes, the processes involved were liable to become gridlocked. To find out how to avoid this, we had to keep track of all them—and it was therefore extremely important that we be able to map them.”

Mapping is essential not only to process organization but also, as Wilhelm explains, visualization: determining how and where one process-related module affects another, or the department as a whole. At ABB, he points out, each department is linked to one or more modules of the business information system on a one-to-one basis. “We started out visualizing the processes in PowerPoint,” he says. “But as a flowcharter tool, PowerPoint or Visio simply are not the most suitable applications to use if you want to map business processes and make the results available to users.” So ABB looked for a solution that would meet these requirements.

Wilhelm considered two others in addition to iGrafX, and compared the features in all three. He quickly reached a decision: “the iGrafX Platform allows you to link items to one another right down to event level. And the ability to make these flows available over the Web was in itself a compelling reason to choose this product.” By ‘event level’, Wilhelm is referring to one of the five levels that comprise ABB’s iGrafX-developed process model: the first and highest level is the strategic one—it determines how the business is controlled. At level three are the operational processes. Level five is where events take place.

The Benefits

“Using iGrafX, we were able to visualize, document, analyze—and improve—our business processes,” says Wilhelm. “And, with the iGrafX Platform repositories, we can make processes easily available to authorized users by publishing them on the Web—and that, in turn, has improved our communication. Also, the ability to access repository documents without requiring a separate publishing step has improved end-user job satisfaction and decreased web maintenance costs.”

In addition to iGrafX Modeling and Platform licenses, ABB has also purchased iGrafX[®] Process™ for Six Sigma. “We have yet to generate more content before starting to analyze our processes with Process for Six Sigma—as soon as we have enough content, we’ll launch into it,” says Wilhelm.

Wilhelm offers an enthusiastic summary of his experience with iGrafX: “iGrafX tools have proven ideal for us. The iGrafX Platform, combined with the repository capabilities, has helped us keep track of the complex and often interdependent processes within our organization, allowing us to streamline them more effectively.” He adds, “The entire company will reap the benefits.”

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