



Company Details

Founded in 1902, Air Liquide is a worldwide leader in the production and distribution of medical and industrial gases, serving over 1 million customers in various industries through 130 subsidiaries in 65 countries. The company has 31,900 employees and sales revenues of €8.4 billion for 2003.

Location

- France

Industry

- Chemicals

Business Challenges

- Satisfy a million customers around the world with new procurement habits
- Reduce costs, functional overlap and inefficiencies due to decentralisation

Solution Overview

- Finance, Procurement, Maintenance Supply Chain and Active Cycle Process integration
- Reinforcement of European platforms, allowing for the shared use of common resources
- Convergence of 29 information systems to a European SAP Data Centre

"In terms of enterprise scale, Opera is the largest project Air Liquide has ever run. It centralises resources, expertise and systems that up to now have been spread across our different businesses in Europe. With SeeBeyond as the cornerstone of our information exchange, the consolidated infrastructure will enable us to deliver enhanced services faster and at reduced cost." **Michel David**, Managing Director for Air Liquide Shared European Information System (ALSEIS)

Business Challenges

Air Liquide is a global group specialising in industrial and medical gases and related services. The Company supplies oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen and many other gases and services to a large spectrum of industries. From hospitals and food processing plants to oil refineries and aerospace facilities, the company serves more than one million customers around the world.

Air Liquide had become decentralised as a consequence of its global expansion across every continent, the diversification of its customers over the years, and the recession of the early 90s that prompted cost-cutting and restructuring.

Decentralisation meant the organisation had a strong local support to serve demanding customers but also had to contend with a number of inefficiencies slowing down its capability to meet new challenges. These included satisfying a million customers around the world, many of whom had new procurement habits (e.g. global negotiation instead of at a country level).

Air Liquide looked at its activities that were characterised by overlapping, time-consuming, administrative and excessive paperwork, and focused on cutting those inefficiencies out of the value chain. In addition a new European resource centre was introduced within the Air Liquide Shared European Services (ALSES) with the mission to centralise, consolidate and streamline resources, processes, infrastructure and information.

Solution Overview

As a part of its mission, ALSES had to conduct convergence of 29 information-systems with a same number of IT teams and over 100 disparate business specific applications throughout Europe. Thus, Air Liquide decided to build a European "Data Centre" based on SAP R/3 for 6,000 users to streamline Quote-to-Cash processes in areas such financials, supply chain, sales, maintenance and active cycle.

Air Liquide selected SeeBeyond in order to support and accelerate its SAP deployment, linking the various disparate systems and applications distributed in the 29 subsidiaries to the central SAP Data Centre.

"With its unified, open and fully distributed network-centric solution, SeeBeyond allows us to rationalise and optimise our processes as well as to increase the visibility and transparency of information. Ultimately, this translates into better service for our customers and more effective management of our activities," explained **Michel David**, Managing Director for ALSEIS.

A team of 26 people formed by ALSEIS, system integrators and SeeBeyond's consultants initially designed the architecture and implemented the SeeBeyond solution. Business data such as purchase orders, sales orders, delivery notes, and "live data" such as financial information related to payroll, billing, or invoicing, was synchronised across customer and product master data systems.

The project went live in January 2003, less than 40 weeks after development began. This phase covered Air Liquide's French Subsidiaries' demand and supply chain flows with over 60 interfaces processing an average of 20,000 messages per day, with peaks at 200 messages per minute.

Business Benefits

SeeBeyond's solution helped Air Liquide respond quickly to changing business conditions, boosting the convergence, rationalisation and sharing of information, processes and infrastructure. This significantly reduced the risks and the costs related to the deployment of its European SAP ERP system. Additionally, SeeBeyond provides Air Liquide with the agility to strategically plan future integrations – for existing subsidiaries as well as for further acquisitions and alliances – by enabling rapid deployment time, flexibility and cost-efficiency, through the ability to maximise reuse and leverage the best-practices associated with the standard frameworks already developed. As Air Liquide America also selected SeeBeyond, both Air Liquide's American and European operations are able to harmonise and share procurement, manufacturing and sales processes; irrespective of the applications, platforms and protocols involved – e.g. Air Liquide America is using Oracle 11i ERP.

Plans for the Future

In all, the SeeBeyond solution is being used for incremental SAP rollouts in the 29 European subsidiaries, linking over 100 legacy business specific applications including approximately 500 different flows of information to the SAP ERP. Air Liquide has recognised the value of SeeBeyond for simplifying and standardising IT practices. Therefore, the use of SeeBeyond has been expanded to seamlessly integrate other applications to the overall infrastructure with real-time synchronisation of data. These projects include NEPAL, the award winning online procurement system based on Commerce One e-procurement technology, and BAICAL, the reseller portal based on BroadVision.

"Combining the advantages of an SAP Data Centre and SeeBeyond has been a key accelerator of our strategy, simplifying our move towards a re-centralisation while offering the capability to share corporate processes and leveraging the resources that remain distributed throughout the world. We are confident SeeBeyond will continue to deliver value for Air Liquide to satisfy customer requirements while enhancing the Group's expertise and competitiveness."

Patrick Franchinard, Director, European IT Operations

Business Benefits

- European SAP ERP system deployment at reduced risk, time and cost
- Faster time to market for new business deployment
- Joint ERP-eAI approach maximising resource sharing

Technology Profile SeeBeyond Components

- eGate™ Integrator 4.5.2

Integrations

- SAP R/3 4.6
- Commerce One
- Logistic Manager
- HR Access
- BMC Patrol
- Oracle, Sybase and MS SQL Server bespoke applications

Sizing

- SAP R/3 for 6,000 users through 29 subsidiaries in 15 countries
- 140 flows implemented in eGate Integrator, processing daily over 20,000 messages, with peaks at 200 messages per minute

Hardware OS

- 2 SunFire 12K 4x 900Mhz CPUs – 16 GB RAM
- Sun Solaris 8