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Who's Bought What?

Daimler Financial Services (DFS), part of the Daimler Group, is to implement **Sword Apak's** universal Wholesale Finance solution as its sole global platform.

DFS offers tailor-made leasing and financing solutions to promote vehicle sales of the Daimler Group's international brands – including Mercedes Benz cars, trucks, buses and vans – across more than 40 countries. Its product portfolio includes financing, leasing, insurance and fleet management services. Contract volumes exceed €60 billion.

One of the driver's for this project was the reduction of DFS's cost overhead for providing dealer stock funding by unifying its worldwide wholesale finance operations. 'We had developed individual solutions for each and every market,' explains Thomas Weltrowski, DFS's director of European operations. In 2007, a strategic initiative was established to streamline the IT landscape through standardisation, automation and consolidation. This would be carried out according to DFS's own definition of best-practice, the principles of which were established in consultation with the various group members.

As part of this exploration, DFS set up

its Global Products, Processes and Systems (GPS) programme. As well as serving to define a global template for retail, wholesale, accounting and Business Intelligence for all processes, with only minor local variations permissible for the wholesale business (for tax or legal purposes, for example), the programme aimed to identify the requirement for a consolidated stock funding solution. This would mean one system being used across all countries and companies. 'It's our strategy to further optimise our customer and dealer satisfaction by implementing more efficient processes and systems,' explains Weltrowski. 'To bring the costs down, you really have to change your attitude by more harmonisation, standardisation and automation.'

Having established via GPS the global template and IT requirements, a 'fast-track' approach was initiated with system selection commencing last year. A shortlist of three vendors was drawn up: 'there are not so many vendors which are able to offer these kind of services', notes Weltrowski.

Explaining the decision to go with Sword Apak, he says the system was just one consideration. 'For us it was also important that the vendor was willing to align

their strategic development of the system with our wholesale strategy.'

Despite the size of the task, no consultants will be used, the project being managed by vendor and client only. 'We have the business understanding and the right skilled employees within our company,' comments Weltrowski. 'This is a long-distance flight,' he adds. Doing it this way 'keeps the team focused'. The central team from client and vendor will remain constant throughout, but each country deployment will use local DFS specialists to ensure the correct interpretation of the template.

The project is currently at the implementation stage. Roll-out is planned to commence in Q1 2010 when Sword Apak's WFSv6 system will be deployed in France. 'Starting with a mid-sized country like this gives us the possibility to gather first experience whether it is working with Sword Apak, with our central team and with our local specialists,' comments Weltrowski. Germany will then follow, with another ten European countries scheduled to go live throughout the first implementation period. The project will then extend out to the rest of DFS's operation.

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