UNIFACE
Advanced Development Technology

Thanks to Uniface, Point Software can satisfy every customer request – which has helped it become a market leader.

▶ **CUSTOMER**
Point Software

▶ **SECTOR**
Software development

▶ **COUNTRY**
Germany

▶ **CHALLENGE**
- Developing an ERP solution and customizing it for a range of industries and companies

- Incorporation of numerous features such as comprehensive process support and complex contract management

- Integration with customers' existing ERP systems

- Continuing to grow the business with a small development team

▶ **RESULTS**
- Choosing Uniface to build and tailor the ERP software

- Adapting the ERP solution to the needs of both specific sectors and individual customers

- Expanding the existing offering to a new market segment

- Working to deliver a mobile interface

Point Software specializes in software for the agricultural sector, and is the leading supplier of applications for managing malting plants, where grain is turned into malt for use by breweries.

Thanks to Uniface, industry- and customer-specific requirements can be implemented by just a small team of developers. In the future, Point Software is also looking to conquer another specialized market: the seed production and sales industry. It also plans to make its solutions available on smartphone and tablets, again using Uniface.

Every customer request is satisfied

Point Informationsverarbeitung und Consulting GmbH & Co. KG, or Point Software for short, has been developing applications for 25 years – initially in Cobol for Unix platforms. With the emergence of Microsoft Windows, the company started developing for Windows platforms too, and opted for the Uniface development environment.

The company has become a market leader for the specialist applications used by malt producers to manage their businesses. "A good 80 to 90 percent of companies in Germany's malt business rely on our software," says founder and managing director Horst Knauthe. Point Software is not only active in Germany – it also has a presence in other European markets. Its customers include the world's largest producer of specialist malts, Wyermann Malz, which produces malt varieties such as chocolate, caramel, rye, spelt and smoked, among many other types.

Knauthe considers that the company owes a large part of its success to its ability to satisfy any customer requirement with a very small development team. Initially this team consisted of himself plus a handful of staff, and today it still has only 10 IT experts. Such a level of achievement is only possible because of Uniface's productivity, particularly with respect to customized solutions. Knauthe says: "From time to time, we have looked at other options, such as .NET. However, we always come back to Uniface, because it's the only environment that lets us address individual requests with so little programming effort and expense." Knauthe adds a further argument in favor of Uniface: It's Windows-friendly, so Uniface applications can run with no compatibility problems on a huge range of machines.

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Over time, Point Software has developed an ERP package, Point21, which serves as the basis for its more specialized solutions such as Agrar21 (for agriculture, with a version especially for malt production, Agrar21.Malz) and Bau21 (for building materials).

Addressing specialist industry needs with ease

A recurrent feature of every development project is adapting software to the needs of both specific sectors and individual customers, complementing basic functions such as master data management. In the malting sector, for instance, these customizations include silo and batch management: Throughout the malt production process, purchasers and suppliers agree characteristics such as protein content, grain size, and moisture content. The application must store all this information.

Later, the malting plant laboratory checks 70 to 80 factors such as color and aroma. The malt is then assigned to batches according to these factors, and the batches are stored in separate silos. Agrar21's laboratory module records all the measurements taken and triggers an alarm if they deviate from target.

When an order is received from a brewer, the malting plant mixes the product to the desired specification from the various silos. The Point Software application's accurate inventory records make this precise mixing possible. In addition, it records reductions in value that can arise during storage due to changes in quality of the product. This information enables the malt producer to split the product up into three categories: two different quality levels for brewers and a third category for sale as animal feed.

> " *With Uniface, we can address individual customer preferences without undue effort and expense."*

Horst Knauthe,
Founder and MD

"A general solution such as SAP ERP can't carry out these steps in the way the malt producer wants," says Knauthe. To overcome this limitation, Point Software can link its applications to a third-party ERP system via interfaces such as SAP's IDOC format. Master data and order details can then be passed across from the third-party ERP system to Agrar21.Malz. The specialist application handles the necessary processing steps and then passes data such as lab analyses and inventory changes back to the ERP, which generates the delivery note and invoice.

Managing complex contract processing for agriculture

Alongside production processes, Agrar21 also handles another essential requirement of Germany's agricultural industry: contracts. Master agreements for 12-18 months are in common use and define what quantities a customer wishes to purchase, with what specification and at what price. Often there are time-related surcharges, so that where a customer defers a delivery, the price per kilo increases by a previously specified amount. In addition to the long-term agreement between a malt producer and a brewery (for example), several sub-contracts are generally agreed specifying the price for a single delivery. If a delivery deviates from any of the agreed specifications, this results in a deduction for the seller.

This type of contractual processing is beyond the scope of a conventional ERP solution – but Point Software's application can handle it. This is an example of functionality that has been added to the product over time, often at the request of specific customers. Because of Uniface's productivity, these projects have always been completed at an acceptable cost and within agreed time-frames, so that the customers were quickly able to start using the additional functionality.

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Managing directors tell us they need to be able to view data on their smartphones or tablets during client meetings."

Horst Knauthe,
Founder and MD

Future plans: a new market, plus mobile access

Given these positive experiences in the malt market, Horst Knauthe and his team are now looking to conquer a new, and even larger, market segment: seed production and sales. "Like the malt sector, this is an area where you won't get anywhere without customizing the product to the needs of the market and individual customers," says Knauthe. Thanks to Uniface, and the wealth of experience Point Software has built up in the malt business, the software specialist expects to be able to offer a competitive solution right from the start. Agrar21 can already carry out the sector's key processes: Contracts and constant quality control play major roles in the seed industry, as well as in malt production. Further industry-specific functionality is being added by the Uniface development team.

Knauthe and his colleagues are also keen to take up the challenge of providing customers with mobile access: "Managing directors tell us they need to be able to view data on their smartphones or tablets during client meetings," says Knauthe. "And sales staff want to record a quote in the field and send it straight to the firm's ERP system," he adds. To develop a user interface that's optimized for mobile, Point Software intends to use Uniface – the development environment to which it owes so much of its success and long-established market presence.

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About Uniface

Uniface is a leading provider of model-driven, low-code application development and deployment software for enterprise businesses, software integrators and ISVs. Headquartered in the Netherlands with U.S. offices in Detroit, Uniface serves clients around the world both directly and through a network of closely vetted, highly skilled partners.

Our technology helps companies quickly and efficiently adapt to changing user behavior and preferences, leverage new technologies, adopt more effective development and deployment methodologies, and get the most out of their workforce talent. Learn more at www.uniface.com

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