

The VELUX Group

Roof window and skylight manufacturer taps
Accenture, HPE for SAP HANA

“We had three main drivers: Bring more data to more users, faster; move from a static to a rolling forecasting model; and leverage advanced tools such as predictive analytics.”

– Anders Reinhardt, head of global business intelligence, VELUX Global Financial Management



Objective

Accelerate and enhance business analytics to drive global competitiveness

Approach

Engage Accenture, HPE, and SAP® in collaborative project deploying HPE AppSystems for SAP HANA

IT matters

- Reports 20–60 percent faster
- DSO activation from four hours to six minutes
- Process chains from seven hours to two hours
- Hierarchy reports accelerated

Business matters

- Deliver better data, faster, to more users
- Enable rolling vs. static forecasts
- Enable predictive analytics, mobile reporting
- Detect, act on customer trends faster

VELUX®



The VELUX Group is a Danish manufacturer of windows and skylights that runs 15 production companies and 39 sales companies, and employs 10,000 workers worldwide. Although concentrated in Europe, VELUX also operates in North America, America, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, and maintains one of the strongest global brands in the building materials sector. To sharpen its competitive edge, the VELUX Group aimed to render its data capabilities more agile and accessible.

Since 2005, the VELUX Group has worked with HPE partner Accenture as its IT outsourcing provider. The company also was an HPE customer, running its SAP infrastructure on HPE Superdome Servers. When SAP began replacing its Integrated Planning (IP) application with Business Planning and Consolidation (BPC), the VELUX Group saw this as an opportunity to move to a more dynamic forecasting model.

To get the most out of BPC, the company decided to implement SAP HANA®, running on HPE AppSystems for SAP HANA scale-out configuration, as the underlying database. The solution paves the way for the VELUX Group to transform its data capabilities with advanced tools for predictive analytics, mobile access, and real-time reporting.

Global manufacturer hones competitive edge with dynamic forecasting

Three years ago, the VELUX Group counted only 800 end users of corporate data. To support data-driven decision making, the

company aimed to extend its reporting systems, with self-service, to most of the 4,500 PC-equipped employees—people who work not just in management and finance but also logistics, sales, manufacturing, and other functional areas of the business. The VELUX Group wanted to include data not just from SAP, but also external sources such as customer relationship management (CRM) systems and service registrations taking place outside of SAP.

To sharpen its attunement to market conditions and customer trends, the VELUX Group aimed to enable rolling monthly forecasts instead of static annual ones. In short, the company wanted to deliver more data, from more sources, to more end users, faster, and with greater analytic value added.

In 2011, the VELUX Group implemented SAP BusinessObjects Business Intelligence (BI) to accelerate reporting from minutes to seconds and to enable self-service. This replaced legacy tools that were inflexible and cumbersome to use. Next, the VELUX Group aimed to deploy SAP BPC to speed planning and consolidate financial reporting.

The company had also been investigating SAP HANA, SAP's in-memory database management system. SAP HANA takes large volumes of data, processes it from the source in near real time, and makes the information available to SAP BusinessObjects. HPE AppSystems for SAP HANA are built on HPE Converged Infrastructure tuned and optimized to deliver maximum performance for SAP applications. The scale-out configuration supports very large data volumes, and offers automated failover for high availability.

The VELUX Group decided the move to BPC was the right time to implement HPE AppSystems for SAP HANA, to unleash the advanced analytic capabilities inherent in the new business planning and consolidation tool.

Accenture manages HANA project

For several years, HPE partner Accenture had been managing the VELUX IT infrastructure, freeing the company's IT staff to focus on business issues. Accenture is one of the world's leading providers of management consulting, technology, and outsourcing services, with operations in more than 54 countries.

"Business intelligence is not just about IT technology; it's about understanding the role of reporting in business strategy," says Anders Reinhardt, head of global business intelligence at VELUX Global Financial Management. "Accenture brings strong management and consulting skill as well as professional experience in business intelligence."

The VELUX Group formed a project steering group that included Accenture, SAP, and HPE. VELUX chose HPE because of the Danish firm's previous positive experiences with HPE Superdomes, and because SAP and HPE had collaborated closely to develop HPE AppSystems for SAP HANA.

Reinhardt wanted to make sure the project team defined clear roles and deliverables, and could work effectively together. He was not disappointed.

"Hardware and software are melding completely together in HANA; the solution is all about software utilizing hardware to realize its capabilities," Reinhardt says. "I wanted close cooperation among the vendors, to avoid conflict about who was responsible for fixing any problems. The team handled all that brilliantly. HPE didn't just deliver hardware and leave; it's been an integral part of the project throughout and still brings value in relation to HANA operations."

The solution team conducted a series of workshops to hammer out every detail, from how the servers would fit in their designated room to how long the cables should be. They also made a number of key architectural decisions. One was to move the entire BI system on top of HANA. The alternative, to run the traditional BI system on its legacy database, would have entailed the cost and trouble of maintaining two separate systems.

"We decided to move everything and remain with one system," Reinhardt says. "We will do our remodeling when we have a good business reason to go forward—migrate it, recreate the data models using SAP HANA Studio, and thereby create a much leaner and faster setup."

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The team also thought through how to handle disaster tolerance. In other implementations, the VELUX Group had used mirrored systems. In this case, it wanted to avoid incurring excessive HANA licensing costs, as well as the cost of purchasing and

maintaining non-productive hardware. The solution was to create four environments—production, test, quality, and sandbox—and enable production to use the memory capacity of the other systems if necessary.

"For many years, HPE has provided VELUX with secure operation of our SAP BI platform," Reinhardt says. "Naturally, we turned again to HPE for our new business-critical SAP HANA platform. HPE prevailed in an RFP process involving several vendors."

Customer at a glance

Application

- SAP Business Planning and Consolidation (BPC)
- SAP HANA
- SAP BusinessObjects
- SAP Business Warehouse

Hardware

HPE AppSystems for SAP HANA Scale-Out Configuration running SAP HANA on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications 11 SP3

HPE Services

HPE Proactive 24, based on local Danish resources

Our solution partner



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The VELUX solution uses a three-tier architecture. Underlying it all is HANA, where all data is stored in-memory. On top of that is SAP Business Warehouse (BW), including BPC. On top of that is SAP BusinessObjects, the front-end layer providing end-user access tools such as Web reports, dashboards, and Microsoft Excel analysis.

Having the steering group work together enabled the VELUX Group to size the solution optimally both in terms of hardware capacity and SAP licensing. The database before HANA was 6.5 TB. HANA compressed it down to 2 TB. The HPE solution accommodates 3 TB, providing VELUX half a terabyte for high availability and half a terabyte for backup and future growth. The entire project took just seven months, including one month going live with BPC. During the five-month implementation phase, the team successively migrated and tested each of the four systems.

“From the very first day and throughout the project, HPE demonstrated high competence in the design, delivery, and implementation of the new SAP HANA platform. It provided critical resources to make sure we met our tight schedule. On August 1, 2013, the VELUX Group went into production with BW and SAP BPC on SAP HANA,” Reinhardt says. “System performance has exceeded expectations.”

Benefits extend from backend improvements to new use cases

Daily system operations have been stable, fast, and flexible, Reinhardt says. Immediate backend benefits include 20–60 percent faster reporting; DataStore Object (DSO) activation accelerated from four hours to six minutes; and process chains from seven hours to two hours. Hierarchy reports are accelerated, and reload takes no time at all.

That’s just the beginning. VELUX is undertaking several projects to extend HANA-enabled capabilities out to end users. One pilot project involves predictive analytics for warranty planning. Predictive analytics can spot trends faster, helping the VELUX Group set warranty budgeting and prioritize product improvements. The VELUX Group is also working to improve the way it presents data visually to end users, using the SAP BusinessObjects Explorer data discovery application. It’s also looking into mobile and real-time reporting; online analytic processing (OLAP); and the potential for data generated from social networking in the future.

“The vision is to get everybody onboard this new reporting platform, which offers so many front-end possibilities,” Reinhardt says. “There’s so much value stored in the data around us. Now we can use that data intelligently to be more flexible, agile, profitable, and competitive.”