



Atlet improves customer service and gains speedier access to information with Epicor Service Management

Company Facts

- ▶ Location: Europe, USA
- ▶ Industry: Manufacturing
- ▶ Number of Locations: 9
- ▶ Web site: www.atlet.com

ATLET



Success Highlights

Challenges

- ▶ The IT departments is constantly trying to develop its systems and infrastructure to support its employees within a growing business
- ▶ There was a requirement for a service solution so that the service process was better controlled and automatically integrated with iScala

Solution

- ▶ Epicor iScala
- ▶ Epicor Service Mangement
- ▶ Epicor Service Connect

Benefits

- ▶ Atlet today has better access to service information and data
- ▶ Easily integrated with other systems and modules
- ▶ The databases are well integrated

Four years ago Atlet AB introduced Epicor iScala Service Management to support its service processes. Today the company produces approximately 40,000 service orders annually and Atlet has gained speedier access to information and improved customer services.

Atlet is a part of Nissan Forklift Co. Ltd and one of Europe's leading truck manufacturers and material handling experts. The company is committed to improving the profitability of their customers' material handling. This is done by providing warehouse and counterbalance trucks of exceptional technical and ergonomic qualities, as well as after-sales support and related consultancy services, based on your unique situation.

Atlet trucks are produced at their headquarters and production plant outside Gothenburg, Sweden, where the company's R&D facilities is also located.

The Atlet group includes nine subsidiaries and an international division. The subsidiaries are located in Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Holland, Norway, Sweden and the USA.

Atlet's international division is a separate organisation for its distributor markets that operate according to their Profitable Partnership method, a set of business support concepts and programs, developed specifically for distribution partners.

From old to new

With 1,000 employees the IT department is under constant pressure to ensure that the infrastructure and resource planning run smoothly, from customer order to delivery and after service. Atlet AB has used Epicor iScala's modules for order, stock and invoicing since 1997, and added the service order module in 2007. Today the company uses the most modern version of Epicor iScala's enterprise resource planning (ERP) system after having upgraded several times during the past few years.

"We had an old DOS-based service order system that had been customised to Atlet," says Ingegerd Hedlund, service administrator for Atlet. "The system didn't work in a Windows environment and we needed a modern system that could support us well into the future, something that could grow with us. We chose iScala mainly because the data visibility within the system is very good, we can easily view all the information between us and our customer. A couple of our subsidiaries were already using iScala and they were satisfied so the final choice fell on iScala."

"Today we use iScala in Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands, France, Germany, and Belgium," says Anna Böhnisch, IT manager for Atlet. "In the Netherlands we have a shared service centre that supports our operations in central Europe, and we use different modules in different countries depending on their individual requirements."

For example, at the head office in Gothenburg, the financial processes are managed by another system that handles the company's overall accounts, and this system is integrated with iScala for orders, invoicing, stock control, service and project management.

"We also have a stock planning system that talks with iScala and manages stock values for our spare parts," says Patrik Magnusson, parts manager for Atlet. "This system manages planning and purchasing."

IT charges ahead

Atlet always manages several ongoing projects at the same time and the IT department continues to charge ahead to make sure that they can continue to support staff in the best way possible.

"At the moment we're working on mapping our business processes in all our subsidiaries so that we can put together a best-of-breed template and roll out iScala in other subsidiaries.

We have also started a project to gather service data into a central data warehouse, a requirement we've had for quite a while," says Böhnisch. "We are also considering how we can automate our invoicing processes with Epicor Service Connect, something we already use for sales and purchase orders. There's always a queue of projects here!"

Epicor Service Connect is a business integration platform that has everything businesses need to excel in an integrated, automated environment. It is a central integration point for secure workflow orchestrations within Epicor applications and between Epicor and non-Epicor applications. Users can automate tasks and streamline processes to promote efficiency across the supply and demand chains.

Magnusson explains that Atlet is constantly improving its infrastructure and business processes to help support the company's growth plans. "We have a spare part Web shop that we continue to develop, this is where our distributors can submit claims over the Internet and these are automatically entered straight into our iScala system. We also want to start up a pilot project in the Netherlands where we plan to give all our service technicians mobile IT support, and we are considering how we can improve our purchase order invoicing process."

He continues, "Due to us using several different ERP systems, invoices arrive from all over the place, but we would like them all to arrive centrally and then be distributed out to the correct location. I agree, we are certainly very busy!"

Introducing iScala Service Management

Four years ago Atlet introduced iScala Service Management. Service management solutions help companies coordinate their service centre processes to secure the best usage of resource and material, at the right time, for the lowest possible cost, with the greatest return, all leading to improved customer satisfaction.

Improved service management help companies control their contractual obligations, service level agreements and outstanding warranties to benefit the organization in many ways.

Atlet implemented the iScala Service Management processes in order to make its service order administration more efficient; not really to decrease the time for registration, but to improve its analysing and gain better access to information. In Sweden, customers call their "own" service technicians directly, and the technicians create a large part of the service orders themselves.

The last part is planned maintenance, and this is created by iScala and sent out to the technicians.

The process is pretty much the same as before the service module was introduced, but the information is structured much better and it's now searchable.

In the subsidiaries Atlet customers call directly into a call centre and the service orders are created in iScala and distributed out to the service technicians. Atlet UK also has a working mobile service solution that is fully integrated with iScala. It's taken Atlet quite a bit of time and resources to implement but the solution is today very effective, saving both time and resources.

The iScala Service Management module is heavily used. "We employ 100 service technicians here in Sweden (about 500 worldwide)," says Hedlund. "This results in a high volume of service orders. We create about 300 service orders on average per day, and about 40,000 per year."

High service levels

To support the company's goal of improving the profitability of their customers' material handling, Atlet has set themselves high service levels for spare parts, sustaining a 96% service level in Sweden.

"It takes about 30 minutes between placing an order and reserving the stock. If a customer places their order before 4pm we can deliver their products before 7am the following day, and we have an equally high service level throughout Europe," says Magnusson. "In Sweden we create spare part orders in the normal sales order module, but in Europe, purchasing is done through the service modules to ensure that stock transfer is immediate and the process works more smoothly."

Hedlund explains, "The difference is that in Sweden our technicians call in their spare part order to an order receiver here in the office that create an order in the sales order module after the technician's visit to the customer. In Europe our customers call a call centre to book a technician and the order is pre-created and booked in the call centre so that it can be easily updated when the technician returns and advises them about which spare parts that were used."

From two days to two minutes

The implementation of the service order management processes took quite a bit of time and hard work despite Atlet having put together a detailed pre-study and being confident that they knew exactly what they required.

"I think we had blinkers on and we didn't really consider all the possibilities before we decided how we were going to work," admits Hedlund. "We wanted to keep everything the same as before we used service management, but with hindsight I think it would have been better if we'd thrown away the old processes completely and started afresh so that we could have benefitted from all the possibilities that iScala contains."

One of Atlet's goals was that the customers should not notice the change in system. "Only a very few customers noticed, and that's because they received better service from us, so we definitely achieved our goal," says Hedlund.

Since implementing the service management processes Atlet can access more information and follow up from the system. Hedlund explains, "It's not faster to create an order but the modules are integrated better, for example, the service order and contract modules are fully integrated so that we can retrieve more data from the system. For example, it could take us up to two days to find an hour-reading from a contract or customer in the old system. Today we can access the same information in just two minutes. Yes, it takes a bit of time to build the reports but once they're ready information can be accessed very quickly and it works very well."

"The service module can easily be integrated with all our various systems, a real benefit for us here at IT," says Böhnisch. "The databases are well integrated, but we still lose a bit of time every month solving existing problems and to be absolutely honest I think Epicor should have pushed harder when recommending how we should create the processes from the start. Sometimes the customer doesn't know best even if they think they do!"

Atlet recommends that companies who plan to implement a service management solution take a good in-depth look at their processes.

Böhnisch comments, "Get support from Epicor, map all the processes in detail, and discuss which processes that suit your business the best. Be careful and ensure that you have a proper dialogue with the workshop to decide what you are changing, the system or the processes. Be as critical about your own processes as the system, that way you will end up with the right solution."

Happy despite criticism

After having been an iScala user for almost 15 years, the system has gone through several changes, some better than others. Böhnisch explains, "There have been a few problems

and bugs throughout the years, sometimes they've been found and resolved quickly, but on other occasions it's taken a bit of time, which is a bit disappointing but we are pleased about the existing user group who are active. And Epicor arranges quite a few events where we can contribute with input and feedback, and that's very positive for customers like us. So even if we have some criticism we're not negative about iScala, in fact we'd like to take this opportunity to say that we're very satisfied!"

"With the help of Service Connect the system is easy to integrate, and you can build everything without limitations, very impressive," says Böhnisch. "It's also easier to create reports and we have better control over stock planning than before."

Magnusson agrees. "There are loads of possibilities on the sales side for how to work with customers; you can manage orders, discounts, kickbacks, or single customers in whatever way you

need – the possibilities are endless. It's very easy to manage how to handle customers and spare parts. The user interface on the other hand is not the easiest because functions that you don't use every day are not always located in the most logical place, but once you've learned how to use the system it's very easy, it's just that initial learning phase that can be a bit tough."

Hedlund is positive about the system's search features. "The search features are superb. You can search for whatever information you need from any module within a field. I think that's fantastic!"

About Epicor

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