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Digitize It

User Report
USM U. Schärer Söhne AG

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The USM headquarters in Münsingen near Bern is connected to over 400 sales partners worldwide via virtual.USM

Digital fulfillment of customer requirements

Interview with:
Dominic Deichgard
Head of Sales Support & virtual.USM
USM U. Schärer Söhne AG

More than ever, the USM Haller modular furniture system combines timeless design and contemporary functionality to create individual living objects. But to achieve this, the modular product range has to be configured intelligently and according to technical rules. USM uses the P'X Industry Solution from Perspectix as a digital sales platform for product maintenance, configuration and assembly for its worldwide sales organization and with the webkonfigurator for end customers.

USM develops and produces four product lines with around 9000 individual components at its headquarters in Münsingen (Switzerland), thus ensuring the highest quality. All pieces of furniture are either ready-made or assembled before they are shipped. The sales organization in over 40 countries includes own locations in Germany, France, Great Britain, the USA and Japan as well as over 400 qualified sales partners worldwide. All of them are directly connected to headquarters via virtual.USM - an individualized version of the P'X Industry Solution from Perspectix AG in Zurich. The comprehensive CPQ solution (Configure, Price, Quote) enables perfect fulfillment of customer requirements, efficient and error-free ordering processes, individual assembly instructions and short delivery times. With virtual.USM, program maintenance, sales configuration and assembly instructions have been digitized and the effort effectively reduced.

USM's modular furniture systems are classics for office furnishings as well as at home.

The USM Haller modular furniture system was launched in 1965 and has since become a design classic worldwide. New exhibition concepts for the company's own showrooms in Bern, Hamburg, Munich, New York, Paris, London and Tokyo put the program in topical context. In doing so, they show the diverse possibilities of use in modern office environments, for the presentation of goods in showrooms or as complex design objects in living areas. Subsidiaries in Europe, the USA and Japan, as well as more than 400 sales partners and general importers worldwide, plan project-specific and individual office and home furnishings that meet all the technical, ergonomic and social requirements of the customer. A web configurator for end customers based on the same database complements these sales channels for customizable, preconfigured modules.

Sustainable software investment

The sales organization - the office staff as well as all sales partners - has been using the P'X Industry Solution from Perspectix for this purpose since 2002. Internally called virtual.USM, the solution combines 3D configuration based on lightweight CAD geometries with parts list management and commercial

sales functions. Models from the CAD system are processed and integrated into the configuration logic in order to expand the product range. All construction rules for the components are stored so that only technically feasible and sensible products can be created. "Configuration errors are hardly possible anymore" says Dominic Deichgard, Head of Sales Support and virtual.USM. "That's why we've only been accepting orders from virtual.USM for a long time." Between the USM branches, well-developed VPN tunnels ensure secure connections. This allows a central server to be operated in Münsingen. "The response times are excellent," says Dominic Deichgard. "In global data traffic, you hardly notice the distance." Close integration with the ERP system "infor ERP LN" ensures uniform, end-to-end processes: For example, the respective project status and information about supplier terms are transferred. If a sales partner calls up his projects again in virtual.USM, the data is updated.

Less effort for software updates

The central installation has a number of advantages. The updating of new products and functions, as well as ongoing maintenance, remain with Perspectix.

About USM

USM, Ulrich Schärer Münsingen, stands for modular furniture systems of timeless design and the highest quality. Founded in 1885, the ironmongery and locksmith's shop in Münsingen near Bern in Switzerland transformed into a small factory for window hardware before Paul Schärer broke new ground in the third generation: in 1963, the USM Haller modular furniture system was developed. Today, USM employs around 400 people worldwide. The company's headquarters and production are still located in Münsingen, Switzerland. USM modular furniture systems are sold in over 40 countries through a growing network of over 400 qualified distribution partners.
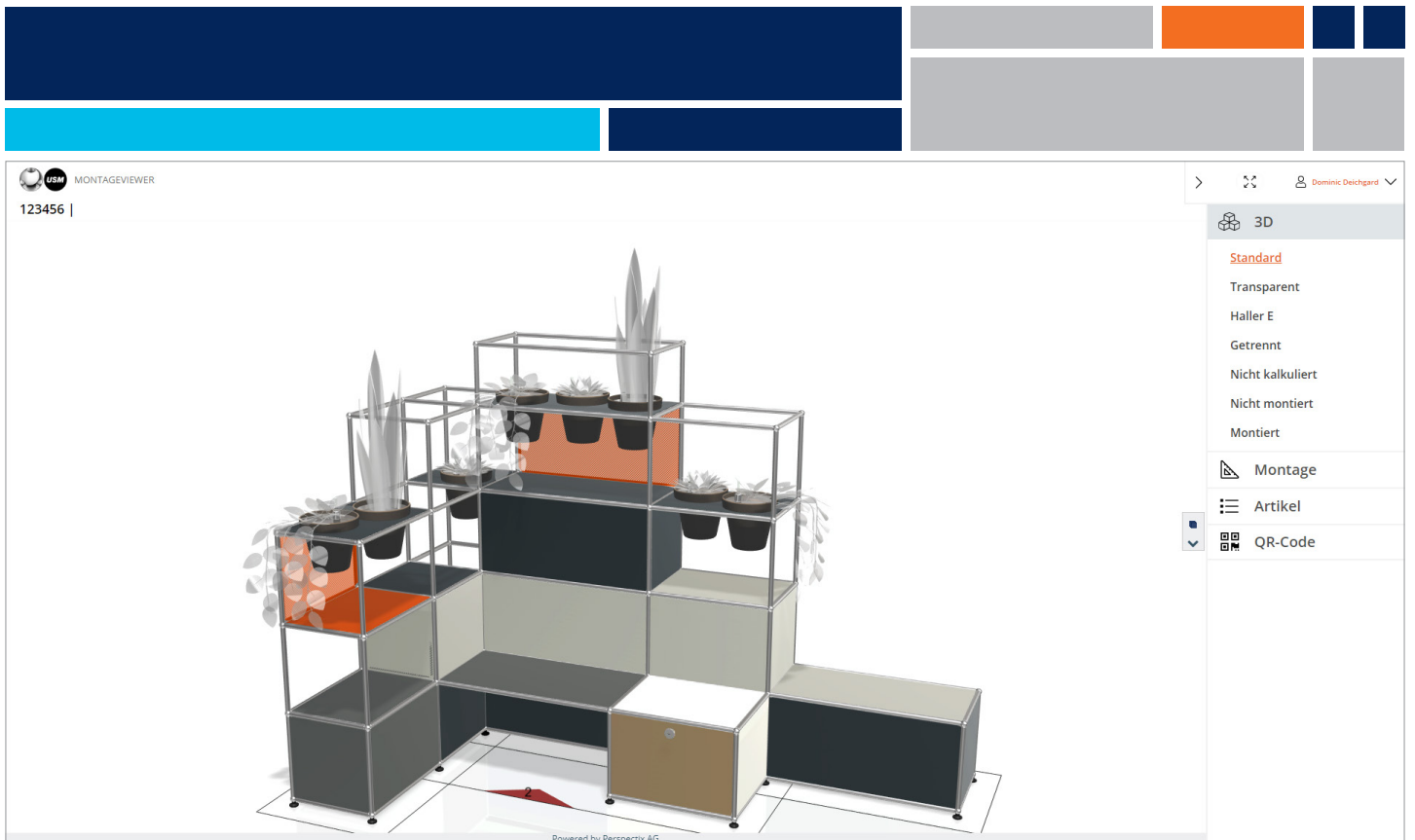
3D views in the new Assembly Viewer explain the final product even for factory assembly

New versions in German, English, French, Italian and Spanish are installed in the shortest possible time and are made available both internally and externally at the same time. Users all over the world can continue working after a few minutes without having to restart - the release notes provide clear information about the new features. "Every year, we distribute two to three main versions with new products, price adjustments in the order currencies and new functions," says Dominic Deichgard. "It has never been easier to support an international sales organization."

Error-proof product configuration

The 3D planning functions, like the sales configuration, are subject to the internal set of rules - errors are thus largely ruled out. Plans, sketches and floor plans can be imported in common formats and used as the basis for furniture planning. Sales partners see a special highlight in the true-to-life visualization, which, with the appropriate zoom, shows every detail that is relevant to the customer. "Animations such as the opening and closing of a drawer vividly introduce the product to customers during the joint configuration process, minimizing concerns and risks and leading to higher identification with a proposed solution," say sales staff. "We achieve very good closing rates and high customer satisfaction after the purchase with virtual.USM." If the customer decides to place an order, the respective sales partner simply has to set the project status to "ready for order". After an

automatic check for completeness, the order can be transmitted to USM via the Internet at the touch of a button. The projects received are checked in USM's internal sales department: "The focus here is on the total weight, the counterweights to pull-outs and doors, or even safety aspects," says Dominic Deichgard "Only a small proportion of the projects are returned with suggested changes." The checked configurations are transferred to the ERP system, which assigns the real articles to the parts lists and triggers the internal logistics. Shortly before the scheduled delivery, assembly sketches are retrieved from virtual.USM. "Thanks to this consistency, the customer gets exactly what he ordered - an important issue in times of online ordering", says Dominic Deichgard.

Integrated assembly and delivery

The assembly documents contain 3D views as well as sketches and accompany the work packages through assembly and packaging. To make this paperless, Perspectix has extended the CPQ solution with an assembly viewer that provides the information via web technology. The 3D views can even be displayed transparently, doors can be opened and pullouts can be pulled out to gain insight into the inner workings. Elevations and installation sketches further clarify complex furniture systems.

"In a short and successful project, Perspectix integrated the assembly viewer into virtual.USM and adapted it to our requirements," reports Dominic

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Alexander Schärer, President of the Board of Directors, USM U. Schärer Söhne AG

"**We achieve efficient, error-free sales processes worldwide with our applications of the P'X Industry Solution.**"
Alexander Schärer

Deichgard. "The pilot operation at some workstations, which has been running since the beginning of the year, meets our expectations perfectly." The plan is for the entire assembly department in Münsingen and Leipzig to be able to access assembly information by scanning with touch panels. "This will reduce our internal effort and the consumption of valuable resources," says Deichgard. "But with paperless assembly, we are also improving the information base of our employees. This enables them to meet customer requirements even better and faster."

End-to-end digitization

The P'X Industry Solution opens up an attractive dual strategy for industrial customers: Perspectix offers a web configurator on the same data basis. With pre-configured modules and industryspecific components, higher sales successes are achieved. The web configurator, which is geared to high usability, guides users quickly and reliably to the desired result by means of 3D visualization of modules and components. The prospective customer requests his individual offer with the project file or orders the configuration through the web store of USM. The technical sales department processes this file seamlessly in the P'X Industry Solution. After consultations, adjustments are made and quotations with 3D views, installation planning and parts lists are sent. "We will thus offer

our end customers a reduced range of products with a smaller scope of functions"; says Dominic Deichgard. "The integration of the Industry Solution with the web configurator saves us duplicate data storage and additional effort."

Long-term partnership

The cooperation with Perspectix AG has been working punctually and reliably for around 20 years. Perspectix demonstrates its willingness to perform in the small details of product maintenance as well as in the realization of the long term development strategy. "There has never been a product requirement that Perspectix has not been able to meet," praises Deichgard. Time and again, the partnership has worked and led to important improvements: "We have greatly improved the user experience. The software is intuitive to use and a pleasure to work with."

About Perspectix

Perspectix AG in Zurich implements sophisticated software solutions for technical sales and store planning. Since its foundation in 1996, the company has continuously developed into the leading technological solution provider for sales and project planning of products with many variants. Users of the P'X Industry Solution benefit from experience in complementary user industries: Mechanical engineering, plant engineering, electrical engineering, furnishing, store fitting, warehousing and logistics systems. The P'X Retail Solution provides users with a customized solution for store planning, product range design and store evaluation. Because of the combination of sales optimization, graphical project planning and product lifecycle management in a future-oriented technology, Perspectix is today a strategic supplier of well-known manufacturers and retail chains as well as a partner of leading IT houses.