



## Fashion Manufacturer Makes Use of Database Technology to Analyse Market Data and Drive Business Growth

### Overview

**Country or Region:** Germany

**Industry:** Apparel

### Customer Profile

Schiesser AG is a leading producer of high-quality undergarments. It was founded in 1875 and is based in Radolfzell, Germany. The company has sales of €200 million (U.S.\$247 million), and employs 3,350 staff including production sites around Europe.

### Business Situation

Employees rely on business data to make decisions about future actions. However, the company's previous reporting system did not allow detailed analysis of information and provided one-size-fits-all reports.

### Solution

Working with NKSYS, Schiesser implemented a new system based on Microsoft® SQL Server™ 2000 Analysis Services and the ProClarity Analytics Platform.


### Benefits

- Faster, more in-depth analysis
- Greater business agility
- Easy-to-use system
- Integration with supply chain partners
- Foundation for future growth

“IT is the backbone of the company because we have so much data to deal with. Our customer base is equally complex and, coupled with the various delivery dates available, we have to process around five million data sets per season.”

*Jürgen Meis, Datawarehouse Project Leader, Schiesser*

Leading undergarment manufacturer Schiesser AG needs to be able to react to market trends and changes quickly in order to maintain its competitive advantage. Its previous reporting mechanism did not provide the detailed level of reporting or analytical capability that users need to make key business decisions. To remedy the situation, Schiesser partnered with Germany-based company Norbert Keßler Systemberatung GmbH (NKSYS) to implement a new system. NKSYS reviewed Schiesser's business objectives and worked with the company to implement a new analytical system based on Microsoft® SQL Server™ 2000 Analysis Services with the ProClarity Analytics Platform as the front end. Now, some 350 users across every department in the company can create reports quickly and easily to identify trends and target areas of activity or improvement. Furthermore, users can slice and dice and view multidimensional information relevant to them using online analytical processing (OLAP) cubes.



Microsoft Windows Server 2003  
Customer Solution Case Study



**Fashion Manufacturer Makes Use of Database  
Technology to Analyse Market Data and Drive  
Business Growth**



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Jürgen Meis, Datawarehouse Project Leader, Schiesser

## Situation

Founded in 1875, Schiesser AG is one of Germany's leading producers of high-quality undergarments. Since its foundation, the company has enjoyed much success and has grown to become a €200 million (U.S.\$247 million) company with a pan-European presence and sites in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, and Slovakia.

The company is committed to ensuring that its garments are of the quality and style that consumers demand. Fashion is an ever-changing industry and, like its counterparts, Schiesser AG has to keep up to speed with the latest trends. Like any item of clothing, underwear has the ability to make people feel good about themselves, which means that the company is under pressure to ensure that it fully understands consumer tastes.

Schiesser's product line is complex and varied. It markets around 25,000 distinct articles each season as well two fashion collections each year. The need to supply products to some 8,000 dealers and companies, both locally and outside of Germany, further complicates the company's already complex business model.

IT is critical in helping Schiesser not only manage its day-to-day operations but also analyse and react to business information and trends. Jürgen Meis, Datawarehouse Project Leader, Schiesser, says: “IT is the backbone of the company because we have so much data to deal with. Our customer base is equally complex and, coupled with the various delivery dates available, we have to process around five million data sets per season.

“Our employees need to be able to analyse this wealth of information to make key business decisions about product success and future direction. As well as responding to customers' needs, we also need to be

reactive to market changes to remain competitive. While the system we had in place was built on solid technologies Microsoft® Office Access and Microsoft Office Excel®, they did not allow us to carry out the deep level of analysis and reporting that we need both now and in the future.”

Furthermore, information provided by the previous reporting mechanism was very much a ‘one-size-fits-all’ offering and didn't provide the different views of data someone in the sales department would need compared to someone working in the marketing division. “We wanted our departmental users to be able to make key decisions on supporting data rather than on instinct. But we needed to find a solution that would help us achieve these goals with minimal disruption or cultural change,” says Meis.

## Solution

The company had already started work to partially remedy the situation. Back in 1999, Schiesser implemented the Microsoft SQL Server™ 7.0 database. It selected this solution because it was capable of handling large volumes of data and helped the IT department to make use of data transformation services (DTS) and online analytical processing (OLAP). Furthermore, core IT personnel could view multi-dimensional data quickly and easily.

Having decided on SQL Server as its core database technology, in line with product development cycles, Schiesser upgraded to Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000, part of Microsoft Windows Server System™ integrated server software. In addition, Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Analysis Services was deployed.

However, as its business continued to evolve, the company needed an application that would give end users access to the data that they needed to make future decisions and

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Schiesser

analyse historical activity. Given the strategic choice to use Microsoft database technology, any potential front-end application would need to work hand-in-hand with SQL Server.

Meis says: “Once we’d decided on a technological foundation, we needed to find a front-end interface so that users—regardless of their level of IT literacy—could use it quickly and easily to get the information they need.”

After thoroughly evaluating the market and aligning its criteria with the available solutions, Schiesser narrowed the field down to two potential vendors: Cognos and ProClarity. After considering cost and usability in addition to its integration with SQL Server, the company opted to implement the ProClarity Analytics Platform. SQL Server 2000 Analysis Services is used to create the OLAP cubes, which are then accessed through ProClarity by departmental users.

Schiesser has an experienced in-house IT department, but to ensure this project went smoothly it required additional expertise in the form of Germany-based company Norbert Keßler Systemberatung GmbH (NKSYS). NKSYS acted as a central point of contact between Schiesser, Microsoft, and ProClarity and provides ongoing technical support.

Meis says: “We decided to work with NKSYS because of its deep technical background and knowledge of how to take advantage of the combined power of SQL Server and ProClarity. Furthermore, as a local company, it was able to demonstrate knowledge about the market we operate in and the challenges we face, giving us confidence that it could support us through any problems.”

To minimise disruption, the company decided to take a phased approach to the ProClarity rollout. After an initial pilot with the sales department was deemed a success, the solution was rolled out company-wide. Then,

in 2004, Schiesser upgraded to the Web-based version 5.3 of the ProClarity Analytics Platform, shortly after its launch at CeBIT. It features a number of product enhancements, which help managers define and more closely monitor key performance indicators (KPIs).

## Benefits

### Greater Flexibility and Business Agility

Schiesser now has a much more flexible solution, which is benefiting users across the organisation. Staff can access key business data that previously would have involved lengthy and arduous processes. This has made the business much more agile, which is a key advantage in a competitive industry.

Meis says: “We can now analyse data that we just didn’t have access to before. What’s more, employees are no longer tied up searching for information that was hard to find, or non-existent. That means that they can spend that time on other value-added tasks to drive business success. There is less frustration because users get the data they need quickly and easily, which is as good for staff morale as well as company productivity.”

Previously, users relied heavily on paper-based forms to disseminate information. This led to meetings where people were talking about different iterations of the same core data. Now, every user has one version of the truth upon which to make decisions.

Meis says: “We used to obtain our data from various employee sources and process it using individual filters. Obviously this resulted in various interpretations of our figures. Our task was, therefore, to find one, uniform way of viewing the data—something we were successful in doing with our briefing books. Nevertheless, we are still flexible enough to be able to deliver the right information required by all of our business areas, regardless of whether this happens to be the view of the customer, the product, the

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performance of a certain collection, or sales achieved through a certain channel."

#### **Better Information at Users' Fingertips**

Not only is the new Microsoft and ProClarity system more efficient in terms of accessing data, it also ensures data integrity and accuracy through the processes involved in collecting, storing, and analysing information.

Schiesser can compare year-on-year trends and look for any patterns in spending to identify areas for improvement or targeted marketing. This capability is of critical value to a retailer.

Meis says: "To determine when a specific customer ordered a specific article in a specific size and quantity at a specific price for delivery on a specific date, we would need to analyse about 10 million sets of data for each year. We also sometimes rely on pre-compressed data so that we can go back several years to uncover trends that tell us which types of articles sold particularly well and which articles didn't."

These data analysis demands require a large amount of data to be processed and queried at any one time. SQL Server Analysis Services makes use of OLAP, which is primed to deal with such transactions. Furthermore, using this technology, users can slice and dice information to view it in a number of ways through three-dimensional OLAP cubes. The company's largest cubes contain some 18 million records, all of which are complex in structure.

#### **Easy-to-Use System Enhances Productivity**

Some 350 users make use of the system. These are divided into power and occasional users. Training was a key focus for Schiesser in selecting the solution, and because of the intuitive nature of the technology, users were able to get to grips with the system with just three hours of training.

Meis says: "After just a few hours' training, users can access the information that they need. The advanced analytic capabilities offered by the Decomposition Tree or the Perspective View really distinguish ProClarity from competitive products."

#### **Strengthening the Supply Chain**

The Web capabilities of the ProClarity Analytics Platform mean that Schiesser's employees can access data remotely, ensuring that they can keep up to date with performance even when away from the office.

By offering Internet access to the system, Schiesser's sales force and external partners can take advantage of the information available to strengthen processes. "We have licences to work with other well-known clothing companies and we produce the undergarment collections for many of the companies we work closely with. Today, we are in a unique position to provide them with up-to-date access to the data stored inside our system that is of importance to them from anywhere in the world, on a daily basis," says Meis.

Supply chain partners are very important to Schiesser's business model, as are strategic technology partners that can help it maintain its leadership and realise its innovative vision. Meis says: "This project has been a huge success and we have achieved our objectives. But it would not have been as easy to accomplish had we not been able to rely on the support of NKSYS and its deep technical knowledge and close relationships with Microsoft and ProClarity."

#### **Foundation for the Future**

Now that Schiesser has implemented the new system it plans to build on its success in the future by adding new features and functionality that drive additional business value.

## For More Information

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[www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)

For more information about ProClarity products and services, visit the Web site at:

[www.proclarity.com](http://www.proclarity.com)

For more information about Schiesser AG products and services, visit the Web site at:

[www.schiesser.com](http://www.schiesser.com)

For more information about nksys GmbH products and services, visit the Web site at:

[www.nksys.de](http://www.nksys.de)

Meis says: "We plan to start using management by exception for some of our KPIs so that users only need to look at certain things rather than all of the data. We will use a traffic light system to identify resolution urgency. By doing so, we hope to be able to see the impact a particular event or activity will have on our business, in real time. This, coupled with the new functionality we already have in place, will help us to be much more proactive and responsive to market changes."

The datawarehouse currently houses 40 Gigabytes of data and Schiesser expects this volume to grow as the business does. The new platform is highly scalable, giving the company the confidence it needs to ensure that any surges in data can be managed easily without any problems or additional expense. Meis says: "We are extremely pleased with our data warehouse solution based on Microsoft and ProClarity technologies. It is user-friendly, easy to learn, upgradeable, and Web-based. Above all, it offers us an extremely positive cost-performance ratio."

## Windows Server 2003

Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003

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### Software and Services

- Products
  - Microsoft SQL Server 2000
  - Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Analysis Services

### BI-Software

- ProClarity Analytics Server 6.0

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