



Effective management in a complex environment

Project management and controlling at LSV

The Landwirtschaftliche Sozialversicherung (LSV, agricultural social insurance) comprises 9 institutions and their 3 central associations. Since 1998 the LSV Informationszentrum (IZ, information technology center) has been an organizational unit of the central associations with responsibility for strategic information technology management throughout the LSV. During the course of the strategic project "IS 2001" the need was recognized for a comprehensive yet easy-to-use software solution for goal-oriented project management as well as effective project controlling and transparent cost allocation.

It was the task of the IT controller at the LSV IZ - Ralf Römer – to find a practical solution which could reproduce the complex organizational and project structures at LSV and at the same time offer considerable economic benefits in support of project management and cost accounting. Following a comprehensive study of the market, the decision was taken in favor of tick@ [ticket] project and task management from a-tune software ag in Darmstadt.

The professional social insurance system for rural families and agricultural workers is the **Landwirtschaftliche Sozialversicherung (LSV)**. The insurance system encompasses the duties of the **landwirtschaftlichen Berufsgenossenschaften** (LBG, agricultural accident funds), the **landwirtschaftlichen Krankenkassen** (LKK, agricultural sickness funds), the **landwirtschaftlichen Pflegekassen** (LPK, agricultural care funds) and the **landwirtschaftlichen Alterskassen** (LAK, agricultural pension funds). Each of these insurance institutions is currently represented by nine independent regional institutions per insurance sector, which themselves are independent legal public bodies. The **Sozialversicherungsträger für den Gartenbau** (horticultural social insurance institutions) are affiliated to the LSV.

In 1998 the Informationszentrum (IZ, information technology center) was founded. The main responsibilities of the IZ include strategic IT planning, the development of procedures and applications for the LSV community and control of day-to-day IT operations. Application development, maintenance and quality assurance are carried out at the IZ and at the three development centers at the LSV institutions. Ralf Römer summarizes: **"The information technology center has the job of coordinating and implementing numerous IT tasks for and together with the LSV community, from maintenance procedures to the IS 2001 projects. That also means that with our projects and application procedures we are controlling a complex, extensive**

matrix organization with the clear objective of achieving transparent cost allocation for the LSV community".

The IZ's highest priority task is the redesign of the LSV's application systems, which has the project title "IS 2001". Within the scope of this project the requirements were defined for a project management tool for LSV to form the basis for successful, efficient project and IT controlling. In addition to the usual features that a project management tool must offer nowadays, such as the representation of projects and ad-hoc tasks or data about planning, monitoring, controlling, effort expended, etc, in a single system, further specific requirements emerged as a direct result of the LSV IT organizational structure. However, these requirements should not in any way result in a complex system that is difficult to use – ease-of-use and minimal effort for training and introduction of the system were critical factors for the choice of the solution. Ralf Römer remembers: **"We analyzed the market very thoroughly and tested various solutions. In the end we decided in favor of tick@ project and task management from a-tune software ag in Darmstadt. Today we know that we made the right decision"**.

Rapid implementation in a complex environment

At LSV a secure corporate network ensures safe communication between the various sites. The a-tune tick@ web client is ideal for this technological environment. Based on state-of-the-art technology standards it requires no active program elements and can be made available at any LSV location with no installation effort. Thanks to its ease-of-use and transparent depiction of information minimal training effort was required. Even employees who had very little experience with using the Internet quickly found their way around the solution and can successfully use tick@ in their day-to-day work.

Simple reproduction of organizational and project structures

The structure of the LSV community lends itself to comparison with a company carrying out projects that span the entire organization. In addition to reproducing project structures in the form of project groups, projects and sub-projects and assigning the workers involved to the relevant roles (manager, team member or resource) a-tune tick@ offers the possibility to reproduce the line organization of the LSV community, assigning resources to a particular body or department and defining management responsibilities for these. All workers involved in projects or tasks – whether they are employed at the institutions or the central associations – are recognized in tick@ as members of an organizational unit. Thanks to the tick@ project structure, which is independent of the line organization structure, workers can be assigned to appropriate projects in a managing or team role, depending on the requirements. The combination of these two structures forms a solid basis for transparent cost accounting.

Clear responsibilities

One of the maxims of successful project management is the clear assignment of responsibilities. tick@'s project structure – from the project group to the individual tasks – consistently supports this maxim. At all levels employees can be assigned to groups or teams and finally assigned to tasks as resources. In addition, tick@ requires that one of the team members is assigned as being ultimately responsible for the work. At project level this is the project manager, at task level it is the task manager. He is the person who ensures that tasks and projects are successfully completed. This is documented to the higher levels in the project structure in the form of official sign-off of completed tasks. As soon as a team member sets the percentage complete of a task to 100% the task is presented by tick@ project and task management to the task manager for acceptance and sign-off.

The concept of signing off tasks and projects in tick@ is based on two forms of responsibility. In addition to the task or project manager, a second role in tick@ must document and confirm the completion of a task by accepting it. This is the role of initiator – in other words, the customer or sponsor.

In this way, tick@ ensures that both the people responsible for tasks and the sponsors or initiators are immediately informed about the completion of the work – and that they confirm their approval of the outcome by accepting the task.

Solution partners

Spitzenverbände der Landwirtschaftlichen Sozialversicherung (central associations of the agricultural social insurance institutions)

The central associations represent the interests of eight regional agricultural social insurance institutions and the federal horticultural social insurance institution. The following institutions belong to the central associations:

Bundesverband der landwirtschaftlichen Berufsgenossenschaften (BLB, accident funds)

Gesamtverband der landwirtschaftlichen Alterskassen (GLA, pension funds)

Bundesverband der landwirtschaftlichen Krankenkassen (BLK, sickness funds)

Responsibility for LSV-wide strategic information technology management and managerial responsibility for operations are defined by the executive board and the members' council and are exercised by the information technology center.

The Landwirtschaftliche Berufsgenossenschaft (BLG) is the institution responsible for agricultural accident funds. The legal foundation for the institution is the statute book "Siebte Buch Sozialgesetzbuch" (SGB VII).

Pension provisions for agricultural workers are covered by the professional agricultural social insurance institutions. Both the Landwirtschaftlichen Alterskassen (LAK) and the Gesamtverband der landwirtschaftlichen Alterskassen (GLA) are self-administrated public bodies that are subject to state supervision.

The Bundesverband der landwirtschaftlichen Krankenkassen is the umbrella organization of the agricultural sickness insurance institutions. Nursing care insurance has been in existence since January 1, 1995 and since then each agricultural sickness institution has set up an agricultural care fund.

Considerable time savings in cost accounting

Successful project management and effective IT controlling in such a complex organizational structure as that of LSV requires both transparent and simple cost accounting to the institutions. Cost allocation was previously done using Excel spreadsheets which were collated in a central database for examination and billing. With tick@ the time needed for billing the LSV institutions was reduced by more than half in the early period of use.

In tick@ project and task management every employee assigned as a resource to a project or task only has access to the tasks whose completion he is involved in. He documents his work in the form of activities (work steps) of the individual tasks. Along with the documentation of the activity, the effort expended and an estimation of the degree of completion of the task is recorded.

Solution partner

a-tune software ag

a-tune software ag is a software company based in Darmstadt, one of the leading centers for new technologies. From the very beginning a-tune software ag's service offering centered on project and process management consultancy and solution delivery. The successful cooperation with satisfied customers led to the establishment of a-tune software ag as a dependable, financially sound partner in the market.

Today project management and processes still form a-tune software ag's core business. We facilitate project success with our experience and competence – from project planning through steering to controlling. Where technological solutions are required, a-tune focuses on the use of standard technologies on the basis of which client-specific applications in the telecommunications, finance, pharmaceutical, automotive and information technology industries as well as in the public sector are quickly and easily developed.

Our wide customer base includes companies such as Deutsche Telekom, Alte Leipziger, Sanofi Aventis or Tyco Electronics AMP, who have chosen to enter into a strategic cooperation with a-tune software ag.

Software and systems

tick@ project and task management is implemented at LSV in the following environment:

- Microsoft Windows 2003 Server with Internet Information Server
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000 with Microsoft Reporting Services
- Microsoft Windows NT 4.0 and Microsoft Windows XP Professional
- Microsoft Project 98

This ensures that an employee can only book time to a task that he is actually assigned to. Before reports for the billing month are created, the month is locked for further bookings in tick@ project and task management, the necessary reports for each project are created and presented to the project leaders for examination. This systematic approach in tick@ considerably reduced the workload for the project leaders and the billing of the LSV institutions could be done as early as the following month.

A further effect of using tick@ is that project controlling has been simplified. Because employees involved in a task book their time to the task, the work done as well as the estimated work remaining are known, so that not only those responsible for IT controlling, but all involved who have sufficient access rights can obtain ad-hoc information directly in tick@ about the status of the projects with relation to the achievement of objectives and how much further effort is expected.

Reporting in accordance with workers' council requirements

With a modern, standard tool for project management the work of all involved – from team member to project leader to controller – must easily be supported. a-tune tick@ offers this support through its ease-of-use, transparency in the presentation of information and versatile reporting features. However, it must still be ensured that the data are safe and protected from misuse. They may be used for project monitoring and controlling and for cost allocation, but should provide no information about the performance of individual employees. To secure acceptance of the use of tick@ project and task management it was vitally necessary to involve the workers' councils and to reach agreements with them at each of the LSV institutions.

Thanks to a-tune tick@'s flexibility and practicality the requirements that arose as a result of this process could easily and effortlessly be implemented in accordance with workers' council stipulations and the reporting system adjusted accordingly. Certain information is excluded from the reports, which was basically possible anyway thanks to a-tune tick@'s role concept. Thus a transparent reporting system that satisfies all workers' council concerns about security was rendered possible.

Summary

With a-tune software ag's tick@ project and task management the foundations were laid for successful project management together with transparent cost allocation and effective project controlling. Thanks to a-tune tick@'s consistent use of standards it could easily be integrated in LSV's complex organizational and technological structure, with the result that today a central system with traceable IT planning is available that has clearly reduced the workload of all involved in the project. The old reporting system for cost allocation was successfully replaced by a-tune tick@ and the processing time for cost allocation was reduced by more than half: **"a-tune's achievements since the beginning of the shared project should also be mentioned. The a-tune team provided excellent support, stood by with helpful ideas, ensured that the project was rapidly implemented and that LSV-specific enhancements were incorporated in tick@ in a very short space of time. "**

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