Unilever Manages Master Data Using "Prisma"

System from Systrion reduces error rate – workflow software connects 14 departments and six IT programs

Hamburg. **With the aid of the workflow software "Prisma" from Systrion, Unilever managed to significantly reduce the error rate of its product master data. Currently, Unilever and Systrion are expanding the system so that it meets the requirements of the EU Regulation on the Provision of Food Information to Consumers.**

Always providing correct master data to the commerce supply chain partners presents a challenge to many consumer goods manufacturers. Since 2009 Unilever Germany has employed a tailor-made system for generating and updating accurate data: commissioned by and in close coordination with the branded goods manufacturer, the IT company Systrion AG from Hamburg programmed the master data management system Prisma.

This solution, which was developed in Germany, was so convincing within the corporation that it was also rolled out to other national group affiliates in Europe in 2011 and 2012. Now Unilever North America is interested in the workflow software. At the same time Unilever Hamburg and Systrion are currently expanding Prisma by more than a dozen additional data fields so that the system can also supply the information that is required from December 2014 according to the EU Regulation on the Provision of Food Information to Consumers. These data fields comprise nutritional values, allergens and instructions for how to prepare the food, among other information.

Counting all variants, Prisma manages the master data of approximately 8,000 different products at Unilever D-A-CH (D – Germany, A – Austria, CH – Switzerland) alone. The workflow system ensures that up to 14 company departments enter their data concerning a new item. "Prisma covers the entire range of information about a product", says Michael Friebel, the Hamburg-based manager who is in charge of the master data. The system, he explains, gathers "the accumulated knowledge of all departments" regarding a product.

Some of the information must be entered manually in the course of the workflow, for example the earliest possible order date or different descriptive copies. Most of the data, however, is fed into Prisma from six other IT programmes of Unilever: this includes the systems for specifications, product hierarchies, warehouse management (for some logistics-related data), sales planning as well as two SAP systems. In addition to the product properties, the workflow software also handles list price maintenance. "This saves us a tonne of work whenever there is a price change", comments manager Rainer Rusch of Unilever. Now, he says, it is possible to generate accurate price lists at any time at the push of a button.

According to Friebel, the combination of clear workflow and software has enabled Unilever to increase the percentage of completely error free master datasets from 55 per cent previously to now 99.2 per cent. To maintain this level – a good figure for the consumer goods industry – the software subjects the Prisma data

to 470 individual consistency tests every night. If any errors are detected during this process, they are immediately remedied.

Prisma and an SAP master data system linked to it are the sources from which Unilever supplies retailers with product information. The data is fed into the pool 1Worldsync via a so-called GDS Console from SAP. Product fact sheets for the requirements of individual retailers are directly generated by Prisma. *rod/lz 47-13*