

Audimax

– Innovating Idea Management at AUDI AG

Audi implements target software solution

Over a century ago, August Horch, driven by passion and determination, conceived his philosophy for producing “high-quality, powerful automobiles to meet increased demand”. Audi’s philosophy has not changed since that time. The Audi brand still sets the standard for trend-setting technology, progressive design, and sporty, high-performance products, in short: “winning through technology”.

In an environment where one is continuously on the lookout for superior technical solutions, one needs first-class research and development and a constant source of new ideas.

“Information technology (IT) is playing an increasingly important role in the automobile industry”, says Audi works council member Georg Hertrich. “IT applications are used by each and every employee. The continuous development of our employees’ IT skills is a must for achieving the Audi ideal of ‘winning through technology’ in the future. After an IT qualification initiative, employees will be gradually get used to IT applications through Audimax.”

On April 1, 2004, Audi heralded a new era in idea management. Under the name “Audimax” Audi implemented “Idea Management for SAP” software from target software solution. Audimax, an intranet-based IT solution to support paperless idea processing, was integrated successfully into the Audi “mynet” employee portal for more than 40,000 employees.

The idea management program fosters the creation and use of potential ideas from all employees in the organization and covers both German locations in Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm. In mid-2003, 43,810 employees were eligible to participate in the idea management program. These employees submitted 62,403 ideas, from which 27,785 of them were realized. With a participation rate of 46% and a targeted value of € 1.042 per employee, idea management is not only the top program within the entire Volkswagen Group, but also is the front-runner for Germany’s largest automobile manufacturers with 3,508 points, according to the established dib formula used by the *Deutsches Institut für Betriebswirtschaft* (German Institute for Business Economics).

Meanwhile, there are enough PC workstations to give Audi employees full access. The majority of the workforce has already acquired basic user competency. With these parameters in place, the idea management program was ready to map through IT-supported workflow processes.

Setting Up Workflow Process in Audimax

In general, each idea submitted from the German office locations of AUDI AG is electronically sent to Audimax through the Audi “mynet” intranet-based employee portal. Based on their specific function in the company, Audimax displays different screens to the user depending on the specific roles they are assigned. For example, employees without personnel responsibility can only view submitter screens; those with personnel responsibility also have access to screens for employee managers. Employees responsible for reviewing ideas have access to



reviewer screens, when necessary. After the employee logs on he is authenticated by the Audi “mynet” employee portal, the Audimax displays the “Create Idea” screen, which displays the name of the manager responsible for processing this idea. The system then guides the submitter through the few steps necessary to create an idea in Audimax.

If more than one person is involved in creating the idea, submitters can also add the name(s) of other employees from the entire AUDI AG organization and determine their percentage of participation in the idea. An idea submission consists of the current state of the product or process, an improvement or solution, and the expected benefits from the idea. Attachments supporting the idea can also be attached electronically. In the last step, Audimax checks whether all data has been entered for the submission.

The idea is then automatically sent through Audimax to the employee manager for approval. At the same time, an e-mail notice indicating an idea has been submitted is sent to the employee manager’s inbox. The manager can accept the idea in Audimax or send it back to the submitter to be revised. Furthermore, the manager can add supplemental information to the idea submitted, for example, to indicate whether an idea was submitted during a specific campaign week or whether it is a product or process idea.

The seamless integration of the target solution with SAP software offered clear advantages in terms of quality and cost.

T. Neuhaus, head of the idea office



Selecting the Right Supplier

Before the license agreement between AUDI AG and target was signed at the end of May 2003, Audi carried out a careful evaluation of the products currently available on the market. The decision to go with the target solution was validated by Thomas Neuhaus, head of the idea office at AUDI AG, as follows: "In 2003, we couldn't find a product available on the market that met all of our requirements. We were searching for a strong supplier that could offer us a successful and potential development partnership. The seamless integration of the target solution with SAP software offered clear advantages in terms of quality and cost. target not only had a significant number of reference customers, and the necessary experience, but we recognized this supplier had the greatest future potential of all of its competitors."

The corresponding model type and part numbers can be entered for product ideas, or the idea type can be added for process ideas.

If the manager accepts the idea, he or she can search through the search function to find an appropriate reviewer, and then forward the idea with a notice to review. Each time the send function is called in Audimax, an e-mail message is sent to the processor in question. The reviewer then checks the idea, documents his or her decision in Audimax, and when required, can forward the idea to other reviewers to get additional opinions. When a review has been created, the idea is automatically returned to the manager of the idea submitter once again. When all reviews have been received, the employee manager values the idea and assigns a premium to the idea.

Depending on whether the idea is one that has a calculated or no calculated use, the employee manager enters the value of the idea for each applicable cost center. At Audi, idea premiums are generally the responsibility of each cost center that benefits from the idea. This is the reason why the employee's manager requests confirmation of the value confirmations from the heads of the applicable cost centers in Audimax. Audimax also checks user authorization at the same time. After the idea is valued and a premium deter-

mined by the employee manager, he or she sends the idea to the submitter for agreement. If the submitter indicates accordance with the decision made, Audimax automatically triggers a premium payment. If the submitter is not in agreement, then he or she must now enter their reason and the idea is returned to the employee manager to review the decision again.

In addition to mapping the rules for the Audi idea management program, Audimax also provides numerous other functions. Context-sensitive help functions and navigation help options appear on all idea submission screens, as well as access to process guidelines for the idea management program. Navigation help explains the possible entries help options on the form in question. Furthermore, a reminder function sends e-mail notices at regular intervals to remind all idea processors that an idea exists. An automatic escalation feature is also connected to these reminders. If idea processing is taking too long, the next-level manager above the employee manager is informed of the delay. AUDI AG expects a certain acceleration in idea processing as well as transparency in the idea process itself. As a result, every idea submitter can check the status of his or her idea being processed at any time in Audimax. To spark new ideas and to avoid unnecessary double submissions, all employees at AUDI AG can search the entire database of ideas with a full-text search.

With Audimax, the idea office expects a clear reduction in processing times and an increase in process security of the idea management program.

Implementing the Project

Dieter Poeppel, head of the idea management program online project, was responsible for the technical input, configuration of the standard software to AUDI AG requirements, and coordination with target during the development partnership.

Says Poeppel: "We had before us a great challenge in configuring software to be used by more than 40,000 employees, that could handle approximately a million transactions per year, and would be available nearly 24 hours on any given day. We also had to be able to implement any modifications or changes as necessary in the future without too much trouble."

Dr. Denis Anić, responsible for Audimax communications, adds, "With Audimax, we now have an IT application that can be used absolutely intuitively. We laid emphasis on being able to implement Audimax without requiring additional employee training. Employees can find out what they need to do at first glance and Audimax helps guide them through the individual processing steps. Any employee able to use a keyboard and a mouse can come to terms with Audimax from the get-go."