APsolut

Successful digital transformation in purchasing at Gelsenwasser

GELSENWASSER

Unternehmen:
GELSENWASSER AG

Branche:
Utilities and infrastructure

Produkte:
Water supply, waste water disposal, gas supply, electricity supply, chemical park management, infrastructure services, renewable energies, digital grids

Anzahl der Mitarbeiter:
Approx. 1,800

Umsatz:
Approx. 3 billion euros

Stammsitz:
Gelsenkirchen, Germany

Website:
www.gelsenwasser.de

CHALLENGES

- Minimal transparency in the allocation of suppliers, framework agreements and contacts to supplier pools for material groups
- Limited risk management resulting from opaque supplier pool for material groups
- The qualification process and material-group-specific eligibility tests were manual and not possible across the board

SOLUTIONS

- SAP Ariba Buying
- SAP Ariba Supplier Lifecycle & Performance (SLP)

BENEFITS

- Significantly improved allocation of suppliers, framework agreements and contacts to material groups
- Excellent usability for end users
- Establishing a scalable, future-proof solution

WHY APSOLUT?

- Exceptional expertise in SAP Ariba
- Industry expertise
- Collaborative approach
- Prospect of establishing interfaces between SAP S/4HANA and SAP Ariba

The functions offered by the standard version of SAP Ariba are ideal for complex supply chains, making the solution particularly attractive for manufacturing companies. We draw on tried-and-tested, industry-specific use cases to adapt the tool to the needs of a variety of different sectors.

Supply chain risk management is particularly important in the utilities sector, not least in order to prevent bottlenecks. With the implementation of SAP Ariba SLP and the associated expansion of supplier pools (which had been relatively small up to that point), Gelsenwasser expects to significantly reduce risk within its supply chain.

HOW APSOLUT AND SAP ARIBA FACILITATED A STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT

Gelsenwasser is a constant in the German utilities sector: a reliable partner specialising in water, waste water, energy and infrastructure services. The company's focus is on the Ruhr region of Germany and surrounding areas in North Rhine-Westphalia; it also supplies areas of Lower Saxony and has holdings in other locations, particularly eastern Germany. After extensive market research, Gelsenwasser classified the processes that could be implemented at the company and identified potential digital improvements to leverage value.

A detailed internal survey of employees in purchasing highlighted the potential for improvement. Employees said that they were often unable to clearly allocate suppliers to material groups in the standard version of SAP S/4HANA. This increased the risk of single sourcing, as employees often fell back on suppliers that had been used repeatedly, meaning that potential cost savings and improvements in quality that could have been achieved through broader competition – particularly in smaller material groups – were lost. Framework agreements were often difficult for end users to find or were ambiguously allocated, resulting in inefficient processes.

After an intensive evaluation phase, Gelsenwasser ultimately opted for the e-procurement platform SAP Ariba. Decisive factors in the company's decision included the intuitive user experience (guided buying) and the established standard interfaces to SAP S/4HANA that ensured the technical integration process would go as smoothly as possible and would minimise the maintenance required in future. These positive aspects convinced Gelsenwasser that the solution would offer lasting benefits, chief among them improved transparency, streamlined processes and more efficient long-term strategic management of purchasing. Gelsenwasser selected apsolut as its partner for the implementation process, primarily because apsolut has comprehensive expertise in implementing Ariba in a range of different industries; the partnership also offered long-term strategic prospects.

The overarching goal of the project was to stick to the standard version of SAP to the greatest extent possible. However, certain adaptations had to be made as a result of industry-specific requirements that differed from the requirements of the manufacturing industry (for which SAP Ariba is particularly well suited). apsolut overcame

this challenge with a flexible, solution-oriented approach: framework agreements for civil engineering services or motor oil, for instance, were mapped as multi-supplier catalogues and service orders were integrated. Conventional framework agreements were converted to PunchOut catalogues, and employees are now able to directly access external marketplaces that have been connected to the system.

Additionally, the project team defined clear eligibility criteria for suppliers and systematically expanded the pool of suppliers for each material group in order to reduce risk and fully tap into all available procurement potential.

SAP Ariba Buying successfully went live in 2023. Immediately following the go-live, Gelsenwasser launched a comprehensive process to transform its ERP system to SAP S/4HANA; the integration of S/4HANA into Ariba also played a role here. The SAP Ariba SLP module officially went live in July 2025.

And the project is already showing the first signs of success: users are now reliably able to find the right suppliers, contacts and framework agreements for each material group, and they can do so quickly. They are impressed by the solution's user-friendly interface and the optimised integration of catalogues. Above all, however, the solution has created a new level of transparency that, for the first time, provides comprehensive support for a strategic approach to purchasing.

Simon Band and Christoph Stephan, both of whom are responsible for purchasing at Gelsenwasser, offer a highly positive summary of the situation: "apsolut won us over with their keen problem-solving skills. They took a pragmatic, efficient approach that allowed them to overcome every challenge they faced", Simon Band emphasises. Christoph Stephan adds: "Our collaborative partnership and the excellent availability of the apsolut team were decisive factors in the success of this project. Our teamwork with apsolut was top-notch – communication was always open, solution-orientated and on equal terms".
Having taken this important step toward digitalization and integration, Gelsenwasser is now ideally positioned to deliver an agile response to changes in the market and to consistently drive future investments in purchasing and IT infrastructure.