



S/4HANA conversion on the fast track

With the help of Syntax, the Franz Schabmüller Group lays the foundation for technological future readiness through a Brownfield migration to SAP S/4HANA.

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Name: Franz Schabmüller Group

Location: Bavaria, Germany

Industry: Metallurgy

Franz Schabmüller Group

The family-owned Franz Schabmüller Group was established on January 1, 1978, and currently comprises nine operational companies (Schabmüller Automobiltechnik GmbH, MONTES GmbH & Co. KG, ZBG Zerspanungstechnik Bruck GmbH, ZMT Automotive GmbH & Co. KG, WELCO GmbH & Co. KG, FS Technologies GmbH & Co. KG, MONTES Hungária Kft., FS Metalltechnik GmbH & Co. KG, and fresh IT GmbH). The Franz Schabmüller Group employs around 1,100 people at its locations in Ingolstadt, Großmehring, Bruck i.d.OPf., Wackersdorf, Fürth, Hohenbrunn, and Győr/Hungary.

The group primarily operates in the supply serial business and specializes in machining components. Production mainly takes place on partially and fully automated production systems for the automotive and motorcycle industry. In addition to refine surface finishing in design quality, the group's portfolio includes tool and plant engineering, as well as logistics, assembly, and quality services. The company's customers are predominantly well-known premium OEMs and their first-tier suppliers.



“It was neither boring nor nerve-wracking – and as IT professionals, of course, we are happy about that,” describes Alexander Krassler, Managing Director of fresh IT, the internal IT service provider for the Franz Schabmüller Group and the parent company FRAMOS Holding, regarding the transition to S/4HANA. As the central control and coordination instance, fresh

IT serves as the link between IT and the group's companies, taking care of the continuous expansion of SAP functionality and customization and keeping an eye on projects that may be of interest to other group members. Additionally, the IT experts ensured that system changes did not have negative effects on individual companies.

No new functionalities without S/4HANA

“At many points, we noticed that ECC (ERP Central Component) was holding us back, and SAP was no longer expected to provide new features for this system,” explains Alexander Krassler. The next generation of the software had been waiting in the wings for some time. In a preliminary assessment, the IT department examined what a transition to S/4HANA would mean, how it would proceed, and what specific benefits the new version would bring.

Various IT service providers made offers and proposed different migration approaches - Greenfield, Bluefield, and Brownfield - and offered their service packages. “In this context, we were presented with extensive process optimizations and many other improvements. This ‘on-top’ and that ‘on-top.’ However, upon closer examination, the benefits remained entirely vague, despite a significant project scope,” recalls Alexander Krassler. It was not the approach that suited the mid-sized automotive group.

“Syntax understands our requirements”

To gain clarity, the team turned to Syntax. After all, the IT services provider from Weinheim was already hosting the existing SAP system in its Private Cloud. Syntax had also provided substantial support during the initial ECC implementation, back then still known as Freudenberg IT. “The future project manager at Syntax, whom we had known for a while, immediately understood what we wanted, what suited us, and what we could afford in terms of resources,” emphasizes

Alexander Krassler. The primary concern of the Franz Schabmüller Group was to lay a stable foundation for the future with S/4HANA without a big fuss. “All in all, Syntax put together a very attractive offer for the transition to S/4HANA, including an initial entry into the Fiori world. They convinced us wholeheartedly with their SAP expertise, industry know-how, and pragmatic approach.”



Brownfield conversion as the most feasible approach

SAP ECC was running at the Franz Schabmüller Group relatively close to the standard, with changes and adjustments almost exclusively implemented through customization, with negligible exceptions. “In its initial assessment, Syntax, therefore, rated the project as relatively straightforward,” recalls Alexander Krassler. The subsequent pre-checks also confirmed this. Additionally, the results of the custom code analysis using the “ABAP Test Cockpit (ATC)” clearly indicated that a Brownfield Conversion would be the most feasible approach. “Since we didn’t have to make design decisions and didn’t want to restructure anything regarding posting periods or plants or consolidate multiple systems, we wanted to preserve the architecture and structure,” says Alexander Krassler.



Go-live in half a year

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the project. Suddenly, there were free capacities that could be beneficial for a Brownfield Conversion to S/4HANA. The project started with a kick-off and the setup of the sandbox system. “In parallel, to comply with S/4HANA, we also had to introduce the new business partner logic. Although Syntax took care of that completely, it was helpful that the business, machines, and productions weren’t running at their absolute limit at the time, making resources available in the departments,” clarifies Alexander Krassler. The IT team involved the business units in the entire testing process of the migration and S/4HANA Brownfield Conversion. After all, they are familiar with the processes, including their special cases, inside out. Through a system copy, users in the test system could work with the current state of the productive data and go through all cases and processes.

“We promoted the testing extensively because precise testing ensures that everything works as desired in the end. While it takes time, it’s better than discovering errors during live operation. In the worst case, everything comes to a standstill,” Alexander Krassler points out.

An interim system relocation to a new, unrelated IP network also caused internal effort and required further testing. Nonetheless, the S/4HANA transition took place just half a year after the kick-off. Delays were mainly caused by non-compatible plug-ins and third-party software. “That cost us three weeks and pushed us right into the year-end closing phase. However, Syntax reacted superbly, jumped to our aid, and was very, very flexible with us to prevent further delays in the go-live - even though the problems were in no way their fault,” says Alexander Krassler.

Foundation for the Future Laid

All aftermaths have now been overcome, and S/4HANA is running stably and reliably in the Syntax Private Cloud. "The move is complete," emphasizes Alexander Krassler contentedly. "With the new platform, we have laid a truly future-ready foundation. Now, it's time for

the encore - harnessing synergies, benefiting from the developments and standard functions in S/4, and implementing new functionalities." The introduction of Fiori has also been successful, and the first apps based on it have been created.

Honest Collaboration on Equal Terms

The success factors in this project were pragmatic, honest collaboration on equal terms with Syntax and the decision to pursue a clearly defined, well-implementable project. "Our philosophy is to keep steps relatively small and achieve successes - and not to immediately include all process consulting and possible additional effects in a project," says Alexander Krassler. "Because a big bang and a huge toolbox from which you only need 80 percent don't get us any further. It's better to use resources specifically and implement functions that truly benefit the users afterward." With the S/4HANA Conversion, the company has reached its milestone.

For companies that are also facing a transition to

S/4HANA, Alexander Krassler recommends not underestimating testing, in particular. "Syntax took a lot of work off our hands. However, testing can only be done internally. And even if there are plans in place, you have to guide and motivate the users continuously. Some people think or hope that someone else will take care of it. But nobody should rely on that in the interest of a smooth go-live." After the successful S/4HANA transformation with Syntax, the Franz Schabmüller Group is now focusing on exploiting the potential of the new platform and Fiori. "Syntax was precisely the right partner, and we are pleased that the project went so well," concludes Alexander Krassler. "We will now build on that momentum and work with our key users to implement new functions in S/4HANA."





“The S/4HANA migration went like clockwork in collaboration with Syntax. If there are no highly exciting moments and escalations in such a project, then that speaks for itself. I would do the brownfield conversion the same way again - with Syntax, of course.”

Alexander Krassler

Geschäftsführer fresh IT · Franz Schabmüller Firmengruppe



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With 50+ years of experience, 700+ customers, and more than 2,000 employees around the world, Syntax has deep expertise in implementing and managing ERP and other applications deployments in secure private, public, and hybrid environments.

Syntax partners with SAP, Oracle, AWS, Microsoft, and other global technology leaders to ensure customers' applications are seamless, secure, and at the forefront of enterprise technology innovation.



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