

Peter Forscht, COO of ABAS Software AG

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Karlsruhe – For every chronobiologist dealing with the mechanism of the genetically programmed circadian rhythm and its adjustment to the daytime structure of its environment, Peter Forscht would be a good research object: just as others take the subway to go from work to the gym and then back home, he constantly travels back and forth between continents. This is an ideal characteristic to establish the international abas network.

Do you always remember where you are? "Not always," says Forscht with a smile. "It has happened to me that I arrived at an airport and looked at the display at baggage claim and had to try to remember where I just had come from: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Jakarta?" The passionate marathon runner and paragliding fan continues, "I get nervous when I have to sit in the office for three weeks in a row. I want to get out, plunge into new situations and tackle new challenges. I want to experience something entirely new and find a solution for this situation. This is what I really like to do. This passion is also due to my hobby: brain teasers. In my free time I like to occupy myself with mathematics, theoretical arithmetic and questions such as 'Riemann's conjecture for the zeta-functioning' or the Poincaré conjecture."

Moscow, the first international project of the young company

Only since the beginning of the 1990s ABAS has been strategically placing international projects on the schedule. Since the first year of the company, founder Peter Forscht has taken every opportunity to look for international opportunities. A German client had given him a page with an English project description for an individual programming. However, 95% of the content was dealing with hardware-related questions. "I wanted to talk to the customers directly to have the requirements defined. And due to the English description I thought, great - you can go to London for a couple of days, this has always been your favorite destination. The client liked the idea and decided that we should travel together to meet the customer. However, the customer was not in London but in Moscow - the client was the Kosmos Hotel. At that time Moscow still was behind the Iron Curtain."

Greeting from Moscow

"The working language of the Russian project officially was English. However, none of the employees on-site spoke English. Every day a new translator was assigned to us because they didn't want us to become too friendly with any of them. The whole thing took place under Brezhnev during the Cold War. The situation was made even more difficult since the translators were for tourists and didn't have a clue about the organization of a warehouse in a hotel, much less the respective vocabulary. 'System analysis' therefore meant, I asked a question, which was then translated into Russian. Then a discussion started for half an hour and I got a reply to something that I hadn't even asked. It was a struggle to do the basic analysis," remembers Forscht.

"Three months later I flew to Moscow again to present and discuss the developed system. I didn't want to play the translation

game a second time and had studied some Russian. It wasn't much, but still more than 'Hello' and 'Goodbye'. Again, a new translator was assigned to me every day - some of them I already knew. The discussion started, I asked a question, the translator translated. Now I was able to immediately chime in and establish that this wasn't the question I had asked. The translation results had a much better quality. Until today Peter Forscht has stuck to the principle of learning languages. For every country he travels to he knows a few words, this opens doors. Today, he speaks fluent English, some French, Italian, Russian, Greek, Turkish, Indonesian and Swahili. The COO who has travelled extensively is even able to read and write some Chinese characters.

Salesman Peter Forscht

Apart from the trip to Moscow, the beginning years of the company were characterized by many different individual programming contracts for German companies. Through the husband of his Russian teacher, Forscht came into contact with the Karlsruhe Research Center and was able to get the kind of orders that accommodated his liking for physics. ABAS expanded, in the mid-80s the cooperation with System 3 was started by first selling their standard software and then by developing it together.

Computer scientist Forscht, with his natural ability to get into supposedly dry topics became the main salesman of abas EKS, the future abas Business Software. His broad knowledge and the ability to explain ERP in an entertaining way were a decisive factor in the successful growth of the company. In 1992, more business locations were established in Germany and Forscht supported the new partners with presentations and sales workshops. He ensured that his enthusiasm for the software and the know-how were passed on in a good way. Since 1995, Forscht is strongly focusing on international ERP projects.

The first localization

Already in 1987 the first international installation with abas EKS was realized when an abas customer also wanted to provide his French subsidiary. The customer was considering the following, "You guys wrote your reports with the list generator, they are ASCII files and we can just translate them, we do the same with the screens, then we have the whole thing in French". At that time the abas character set still had 7 bit. This was not enough to represent the French accents grave, aigue or circumflex, for example. The character set was expanded to 8 bit. "We also had to realize fairly quickly that financial accounting does not equal financial accounting. After the installation in France we got a call that the French customer's auditor would very much like to have a 'journal des achats, des ventes and de trésorerie'. We had to localize the financial accounting in compliance with French law. The financial accounting and the representation of languages and characters still is the biggest localization task. Compared to Chinese or Arabic, French was a small task. With the project in France we gained our first experience so that we were off to a fast start. An important technical progress was the introduction of Unicode in 2003. Today, the expert knowledge of our partner network helps us in financial accounting. The partners on-site do know a lot more about their financial accounting than we ever could in Karlsruhe," says Forscht.

An expanding global partner network

The next international project in Hungary also developed from the combination "parent company introduces abas ERP at subsidiary". One outcome of this project was the first non-German speaking foreign abas partner in 1998. With its manager Istvan Hoffer, Hungary has become one of the most successful foreign partners. Turkey was added as a partner before the turn of the millenium, Austria has been a partner since 1993.

Turn of the millennium strategy:

"At the turn of the millennium we decided to actively approach international business. Our goal was to be, where our German midsize customers would expand to: abroad! We wanted our customers to benefit from the experiences we had already made and from our already established network. At first our goal was to become the ERP partner for international projects of German midsize businesses - and later for midsize businesses worldwide," remembers Forscht. The search for suitable partners had started. A lot of value was placed on personal contact, time to get to know each other and transfer of knowledge during the partner selection process according to the abas philosophy. A task for which the outgoing globetrotter Peter Forscht was in his element.

2000 to 2010: the international partner network is established

Now everything happened very fast: in 2001 partners in France, Spain and Indonesia were added, the US in 2002, eight more countries in 2003 and six in 2004. "I would have gone on and on," says Forscht, "but the colleagues in development and support had asked me to slow down a bit because they weren't able to keep up with all the tasks." Peter Forscht slowed down, new employees were hired and trained in development and support and then he was able to step on the gas again. In 2007 and

2008 three new partners were added respectively. Today, ABAS has partners in 30 countries worldwide. "Peter Forscht did something very unique here. There is no other midsize ERP provider who was able to achieve this. Especially not with such a small number of employees," praises Wolfgang Klemm, long-term abas partner and founder of abas Projektierung.

ABAS Software AG is still focusing on worldwide growth

The software provider from Karlsruhe continues to grow: "New partners in Chile, Brazil, Russia and Ukraine are planned for 2010/2011. This year (2010) we have our first abas Business Software order in Russia. In the next years we would like to gain Great Britain, the Balkan States, Scandinavia and Portugal in Europe. We are well on the way to becoming the leading German internationally operating midsize ERP provider. In fact, we already are. We need partners, who think in the long run, who like our philosophy and understand our evolutionary development concept and who want to be a reliable partner for their customers. Our German partners needed about 10 years to learn the ERP business the way we understand it. Then they really got started. The worldwide development is similar. The foundations have been laid and the knowledge now has to mature. Business of our first international partners is now starting to pick up tremendously, especially in Hungary and the US, but Spain is also starting to grow." Confidently Forscht names his goal for ABAS Software AG, "In five years we want to make 50% of our turnover abroad."

Company profile

Founded in 1980, ABAS is a leading provider of the most flexible and upgradeable ERP and eBusiness solutions on the market. ABAS serves mid-market manufacturers and distributors focusing on discrete, Engineer-to-order, Make-to-Order, Assemble-to-Order, and Job Shop Manufacturing environments. ABAS provides an unique solution for international customers through its multi-country functionality and global partner network. ABAS is uniquely qualified to successfully implement international ERP projects. No other company has the combination of a unified partner network, strategic orientation, globally enabled software, and international implementation methodology that defines the roadmap to success. ABAS provides quick ROI in that it is easy to learn, use, customize and upgrade. More than 2,300 customers have chosen ABAS as their long term ERP provider and work successfully with the internationally applicable abas Business Software. ABAS Software AG in Karlsruhe employs more than 120 people, and together with over 50 abas partners ABAS employs approx. 600 employees worldwide. The abas software partners provide a wide range of services including implementation, customization, hardware and network support. ABAS also provides on-site support and ensures short reaction times and high service quality. International partners in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Poland, Ukraine, Russia, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Spain, Iran, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, China, Hong Kong, Australia, Mexico, Chile, Canada and the USA represent the ABAS Software AG throughout the world. The partner network is continuously being expanded.

Product profile - abas Business Software

abas Business Software includes abas ERP for production, abas Distribution for distribution, wholesale, and service companies, and the eBusiness solution abas eB. abas ERP is an ERP application designed specifically for manufacturers in the Assemble-to-Order, Make-to-Order and Engineer-to-Order environment. abas Business Software is priced to fit most budgets while delivering full ERP functionality. It is flexible, adaptable, internationally applicable and a save investment for the future. The clear structure and well thought-out implementation strategy of the system enable a short implementation period as well as trouble-free integration into the company structure. New functions and technologies are constantly added to the standard software with each new upgrade. As a result, abas users are always using the most up-to-date product. abas Business Software is currently offered in 28 languages. ABAS has been a supporter of the open source operating system Linux since 1995. Approximately 80% of over 2,300 abas installations are based in Linux.

abas Business Software - range of services: Sales/sales order processing/shipping, purchasing/purchase order processing, warehouse management, scheduling, logistics, materials management/MRP, production/PPC, financial accounting, fixed asset accounting, cost accounting, controlling, eBusiness, portal, etc.

ONE GLOBE – ONE NETWORK – ONE ABAS

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