

LeverX: One Stop Shopping for Your SAP PLM Needs

CIMdata Commentary

Key takeaways:

- *Effective SAP PLM implementations require an implementer that has strong SAP PLM expertise who also understands their customer's industry and business model*
- *In addition to implementing SAP PLM they are also trusted and employed by SAP as a partner to develop PLM technologies and solutions*
- *LeverX has significant experience and expertise in implementing SAP PLM in multiple industries and has the scale to handle large, global implementations*

Introduction

SAP is well known in the enterprise resource planning (ERP) space. However, they are not as well known as a provider of product lifecycle management (PLM) solutions. The reality is that SAP has been providing product data management (PDM) and now PLM solutions since the early 1990s. Unfortunately, the early PDM solutions were limited in scope, complex to implement, and most importantly, had a reputation of being difficult to use by engineering and technical staff.

During the mid 2000s SAP invested to improve its PLM solutions and since that time their PLM solution suite has continued to undergo continuous improvement. Today, SAP provides solid, competitive PLM capabilities including CAD data management and has a growing reputation in portfolio and project management (PPM), compliance, and environmental, health & safety (EH&S) solutions. Because of these improvements, CIMdata is seeing more and more companies that have invested in the SAP suite who are now adopting or are interested in learning if and how SAP PLM can support their business—and then who can help them make it a reality.

In 2011, CIMdata performed a detailed review of the SAP PLM 7.x release¹ and found it to be dramatically improved both in functional capabilities and usability. Since then SAP has continued to enhance and expand their PLM solutions for both discrete and process manufacturers. This includes SAP's launch of embedded visualization capabilities (what SAP calls SAP 3D Visual Enterprise) across their full range of enterprise software. SAP's PLM capabilities are strong. However they are delivered as an integral part of the customer's enterprise SAP solution such that to get maximum benefit from SAP PLM a clear and integrated PLM and ERP enterprise strategy is required. While an integrated PLM and ERP strategy can deliver many benefits it can still be a complex solution to implement. Companies looking to deploy SAP PLM need an implementation partner that not only has SAP PLM implementation experience, but also understands their business (i.e., industry, operational model, etc.). The partner also needs to have the depth of knowledge in SAP PLM and related SAP applications and technologies to be able to define and deploy SAP PLM to best support the company's business model.

¹ <http://www.cimdata.com/en/resources/complimentary-reports-research/product-program-reviews>

LeverX—The Company

LeverX, Inc. was founded in 2003 by a group of senior PLM industry and SAP experts. Its initial mission was to help companies leverage their SAP investments through the implementation of SAP PLM solutions. Over the years LeverX has expanded its scope to become a SAP services partner and channel partner specializing in SAP's Idea-to-Performance (I2P) program that focuses on sustainable innovation, responsive manufacturing, and operational excellence. They provide services ranging from strategy development, implementation planning, custom development, and implementations through ongoing support.

LeverX is headquartered in Mountain View, CA, USA and has development and implementation centers in Detroit, MI, USA and Minsk, Belarus. The staff of SAP solution and industry domain experts provides SAP PLM, PPM, EH&S, SAP Business Intelligence (BI), and SAP Technical Services to companies in multiple industries throughout the world. Additionally, LeverX has become a key SAP partner within the PLM economy. In addition to delivering consulting and services to industrial companies, they have a very strong relationship with SAP and provide services directly to SAP's development, consulting, and demonstration/prototyping organizations.

The SAP PLM Partnership

LeverX has been involved with SAP PLM since its inception. Dr. Victor Lozinski, Co-Founder and CEO of LeverX, was the original SAP PLM Product Manager. In addition to implementing the various SAP PLM related solutions, LeverX is deeply involved within the SAP community that leverages the product lifecycle to improve business performance. LeverX presents at major SAP conferences, local SAP manufacturing customer workshops and forums, Americas SAP User Group (ASUG) meetings, and hosts regular monthly educational webinars, including joint webinars with SAP, on topics related to PLM, PPM, EH&S and related solutions. They have a growing library of webinars available for replay on their website. Their VP of Services, Eric Stajda has authored a book on SAP DMS², the Document Management System available from SAP Press. The quality and quantity of information LeverX publishes related to SAP PLM validates the breadth and depth of their SAP PLM expertise.

LeverX has a unique relationship with SAP when compared to other SAP PLM implementers. Over the last decade, SAP has contracted with LeverX to manage and support many SAP internal developments, testing environments, and demo environments used for PLM, ERP, and Supply Chain as well as related SAP solutions. LeverX reported that they are also a preferred vendor for many SAP organizations around the world. The responsibility LeverX has within the SAP I2P and PLM ecosystem shows how significantly SAP trusts and uses LeverX. Trust like this had to be earned.

SAP PLM Capabilities

In recent discussions, LeverX stated that they have a global team approaching 200 people, almost all consultative and technical. This compares favorably with all but the very largest SIs, and gives them the capacity needed to support large, global SAP PLM deployments. Yet, they are still small enough to be nimble and react quickly to changing circumstances. Their largest development center is located in Belarus, enabling them to offer competitive rates when combined with onsite consultants. Their development and implementation center in the

² http://www.amazon.com/Document-Management-SAP-DMS-Stajda/dp/1592298621/ref=dp_ob_title_bk

metro Detroit area is focused on supporting the growing trend in the US to offer “in-sourcing” of resources at competitive rates.

Over the past 11 years, LeverX has grown to be the 9th largest SAP PLM implementer worldwide as measured by CIMdata, and is the only dedicated SAP I2P implementer in CIMdata’s top 10. They are veterans of many SAP PLM deployments across multiple discrete industries including Aerospace, Automotive, Consumer Products, Medical Devices, Industrial Machinery, and High Tech, as well as process industries including Pharmaceuticals.

Customers

LeverX has provided SAP PLM consulting and services to over 230 companies world wide spanning multiple industries and business functional areas.

In one example of LeverX customer satisfaction, Ms. Lauri Ventresca, Director of Global Product Data Management for Welch Allyn stated:

“Welch Allyn is a FDA regulated company with design and manufacturing sites in multiple locations around the globe. Our engineering change process must be validated and compliant with FDA 21CFR Part 11. Together with LeverX, we developed a sophisticated, fully electronic, globally harmonized engineering change management solution. LeverX worked closely with our internal team to understand and analyze our existing business processes, to develop a comprehensive solution based on SAP Workflow, Quality Notifications, Engineering Change Management, Document Management and Digital Signatures. With LeverX’s leadership and support, our PLM project met our business goals, was on time and within our budget.”

LeverX has continually expanded and deepened its SAP technical knowledge, broadened its industry domain expertise, and developed its unique working relationship with SAP in order to better support its growing customer base.

Summary

SAP has been a dominant player in enterprise business systems for many years. In the early days, SAP PLM had a reputation of being complex to implement and use. This has changed with recent releases and CIMdata sees SAP’s PLM solutions as a viable candidate for many companies. For enterprises that have invested in SAP, the benefits of an integrated suite supporting product development through production and logistics on a single platform from a single solution provider are appealing. For companies with both discrete and process PLM requirements, SAP’s PLM can help satisfy both of these requirements within the same solution.

While SAP partners with skills in ERP and other business operation modules are relatively common, those with deep experience with SAP PLM are few and far between. That PLM experience is necessary to ensure product development is properly integrated with the rest of the enterprise. CIMdata believes that LeverX is one of the providers with the deep, specialized skills in PLM and SAP. LeverX has grown significantly over the years, building a quality reputation. SAP clearly trusts LeverX to support internal needs and customer implementations. Enterprises considering implementing SAP PLM will be well served by reviewing LeverX’s public resources and evaluating them as a potential implementation partner.

About CIMdata

CIMdata, an independent worldwide firm, provides strategic management consulting to maximize an enterprise's ability to design and deliver innovative products and services through the application of Product Lifecycle Management (PLM). CIMdata provides world-class knowledge, expertise, and best-practice methods on PLM. CIMdata also offers research, subscription services, publications, and education through international conferences. To learn more about CIMdata's services, visit our website at <http://www.CIMdata.com> or contact CIMdata at: 3909 Research Park Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48108, USA. Tel: +1 734.668.9922. Fax: +1 734.668.1957; or at Oogststraat 20, 6004 CV Weert, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 (0) 495.533.666.