

**Planning 300 events
integrated with Excel
into SAP.**

Allevo at Hamburger Messe und Congress GmbH

Hamburg Messe und Congress GmbH achieves transparent, fast, and high-quality annual cost planning with Allevo, an Excel-based solution integrated into SAP. With this system, cost center managers and controllers gain more time for their core tasks, providing the management with more reliable financial figures for decision-making.

Hosting 44 trade fairs with over 12,000 exhibitors, 270 congresses, meetings, general meetings, and concerts, attracting over one million visitors annually, Hamburg Messe und Congress GmbH (HMC) boasts an impressive event portfolio. The success of these events not only contributes to the company's growth but also strengthens Hamburg's position as an international business hub.

From securing major international B2B events to managing events abroad, such as operating the German Pavilion at the Expo in Yeosu, South Korea, HMC handles diverse responsibilities. In addition to hosting flagship events like INTER-NORGA, hanseboot, and Shipbuilding, Machinery, and Marine Technology (SMM), HMC also provides event venues, technical support, and infrastructure for guest events.

Excel Chaos in Cost Planning

The complexity of planning, organizing, and executing trade fairs and events necessitates efficient IT support for transparency in operations. Since 2010, HMC has been mapping its business processes using the integrated functions of SAP ERP 6.0. However, the ERP software did not adequately support the complex annual budget cost planning, which was decentralized and conducted using numerous Excel files outside of SAP. Actual and planned figures were manually transferred between Excel and the Controlling module (SAP CO).

In summary, as David Z. Oruzgani, Head of Information Management at Hamburg Messe und Congress GmbH, describes it, "In short: planning was cumbersome, lacked transparency, and was a time-consuming effort."

Streamlined Budget Process, Insightful Numbers

Since implementing Allevo, an Excel-based planning solution seamlessly integrated into SAP ERP, HMC conducts all planning objects transparently and

efficiently in a single Excel interface directly under SAP CO. This user-friendly SAP add-in communicates bidirectionally with the ERP software, reducing manual interventions to a minimum and ensuring more streamlined, accurate, and secure planning.

David Z. Oruzgani observes, "This reduces manual interventions to a minimum, and the planning process runs tighter, more precise, and safer. Simultaneously, the consolidated and validated database has enhanced the quality of cost planning." The central controlling provides the company's management with meaningful figures, enabling them to plan and steer business development even more precisely and allocate financial resources where they yield the greatest benefit.

More than 300 PSP elements planned at once

HMC utilizes Allevo for cost center planning and for the cost and revenue planning of over 300 events mapped in the SAP system via PSP elements (PSP = Project Structure Plan). Responsible for operational cost planning and forecasts for individual months, conducted once per quarter, are 27 decentralized cost center managers. Conversely, the financial planning of individual budgets – expenditures for advertising, press, exhibition technology, protocol activities, and hall rent – is handled on a cost carrier by the budget managers of the respective departments. Until recently, controllers had to extract the actual data required for cost planning from SAP CO into specially prepared Excel sheets and then make them available to the cost center managers via the intranet. This posed the risk of planning based on outdated actual figures, even if current committed values were available in SAP. Once planning was completed, the cost center owners would store the Excel files back in the intranet, and the controllers manually transferred the planned figures from Excel to SAP CO. Only when the last figure was entered and posted in SAP CO was a complete view of the results possible.

Clear insight into cost planning

Where cost planning was previously cumbersome and lacked transparency, it now runs noticeably smoother and faster, with full visibility at all times. Allevo reads actual and planned data directly from SAP into the Excel interface and writes them back to SAP from there. Thus, cost center managers and budget planners from the departments always work with current values. Cost center and PSP element planning, medium-term planning, as well as forecasts, can be

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conveniently represented in separate Excel layouts integrated into the SAP system. All data is checked for validity and plausibility upon entry; thus, the reliability of planned figures is always ensured.

Furthermore, the figures are always up to date – even if they are changed multiple times during the planning phase. Once entered into Allevo, the values flow immediately into the ERP solution, which automatically posts them correctly. Controllers can then immediately identify deviations from budget targets, trace them down to the individual document, and make corrections promptly. With the elimination of time-consuming data copying back and forth, the controllers have more time for efficient monitoring and control of planning and for the analysis and interpretation of the figures. Lastly, controllers can stay informed about the current status of individual planning objects through status management at any time.

Planning down to the smallest detail

Cost center managers and planners are also relieved of manual tasks and can focus even more on their planning areas. Through a process called “Splasher”, Allevo automatically distributes the planned annual values for each cost type, such as costs for personnel, IT, or marketing, to individual months. The distribution is based on previous year’s values or, percentage-wise, on event months according to a predefined key. Controllers can adjust the monthly values at any time or change the distribution keys. Mid-term planning can now be carried out very efficiently for multiple events simultaneously and aggregated into cost groupings. Pre-calculations for future events, such as the expected number of visitors or the sold ticket quantity per ticket type, as well as detailed planning for specific cost types such as trade fair standards and square meters, are entered into pre-configured Excel interfaces called “satellite tables”.

Fine-tuned permissions for 95 users

A finely tuned authorization concept in Allevo regulates which user can view and edit which planning areas and cost types among the approximately 95 Allevo users. Only the controllers are authorized to view all cost centers and cost types, set plan values, and correct entered figures.

Another advantage is that the technical installation of the planning software is simple via SAP transport order. Thus, the costs for the acquisition and maintenance of additional hardware and for the maintenance of interfaces are

eliminated. The implementation also proceeded largely smoothly. Through close collaboration between the internal project team and Kern AG consultants, it was completed within the specified time and cost framework.

David Z. Oruzgani concludes positively: "We have successfully integrated Allevo into the current planning cycle and have since benefited from increased efficiency and transparency in cost planning."

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