ITWU optimizes information access and exchange for Technoform Insulation Solutions

The SysCat – Framing the Knowledge

The proximity to their customers and their perfect satisfaction with products and services are the key aims of Technoform. In order to provide this level of optimized customer consulting, Technoform Insulation Solutions (TIS) asked software creator IT works unlimited (ITWU) to develop the System Catalog (SysCat) - a solution to improve the employees' internal exchange of know-how and to harmonize different sources of information while fitting the needs of the company's different departments. The result is a flexible web- and offline-application that has a catalog structure and holds a huge amount of specific product information. The SysCat is based on a java application server and is connected to an existing Technoform product-database.

Technoform Insulation Solutions as a part of the Technoform Group is specialized in developing and manufacturing high-precision insulating profiles for use in aluminum windows, doors and façades. With eight production plants on three continents and 22 distribution sites worldwide, TIS produces over 300 million meters of insulating profiles annually and is market leader in this area. The insulating profiles are called strips and can be integrated in frame systems.

"In France we co-develop the technical solutions together with our customers", says Nicolas Dupoyet – general director of Technoform (TE) Bautec France (Technoform Insulation Solutions) – about their function within TIS Division. Furthermore, they provide consultation concerning their products as a sales office of TIS located in Lyon and take care of some international customers.

Complex content - easy to handle

The main reason to develop the SysCat was the wish to collect and harmonize the internal know-how of the company and make it available to the different TIS subsidiaries. According to Dupoyet – prior to the SysCat project – every location had its own way to access the information about the customers' frame systems: "Different countries made use of different tools or no tools at all for that matter. The main problem we faced was that we did not have a harmonized source of information. So, one of the ideas was to have a common database or application first in order to work comprehensively across borders."

Another reason for the modernization was a growing number of international customers and the resulting need of a wider view of the solutions for different frame systems. Supposing an international customer wants to reduce the number of frame systems he sells in different countries, the employees of TIS in France need to know all of these systems for comparison and analyzation in order to provide an optimized and flexible system orientation to the customer. TIS needed a smart tool that would allow its employees to find all this transnational information in a fast and effective way, Dupoyet noticed: "We are a customer-oriented company. And the better we know their systems the better we are able to provide accurate solutions for them – that's the first target."

One of the requirements of the solution was user-friendliness. This should ensure that the tool is actually used by the employees and replaces the local ways to access information, that have been developed in the different subsidiaries. An easy and clean interface was an important
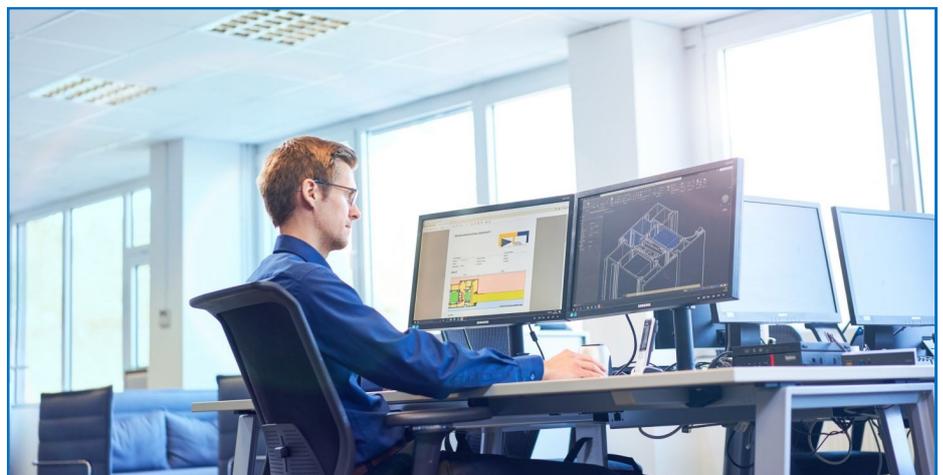
Over the years Technoform has grown to become a Global Player in its markets while continuously building on the local expertise of the numerous locations to guarantee the needed proximity to its customers. The SysCat makes this regional know-how available for all TIS employees and flexible to use.
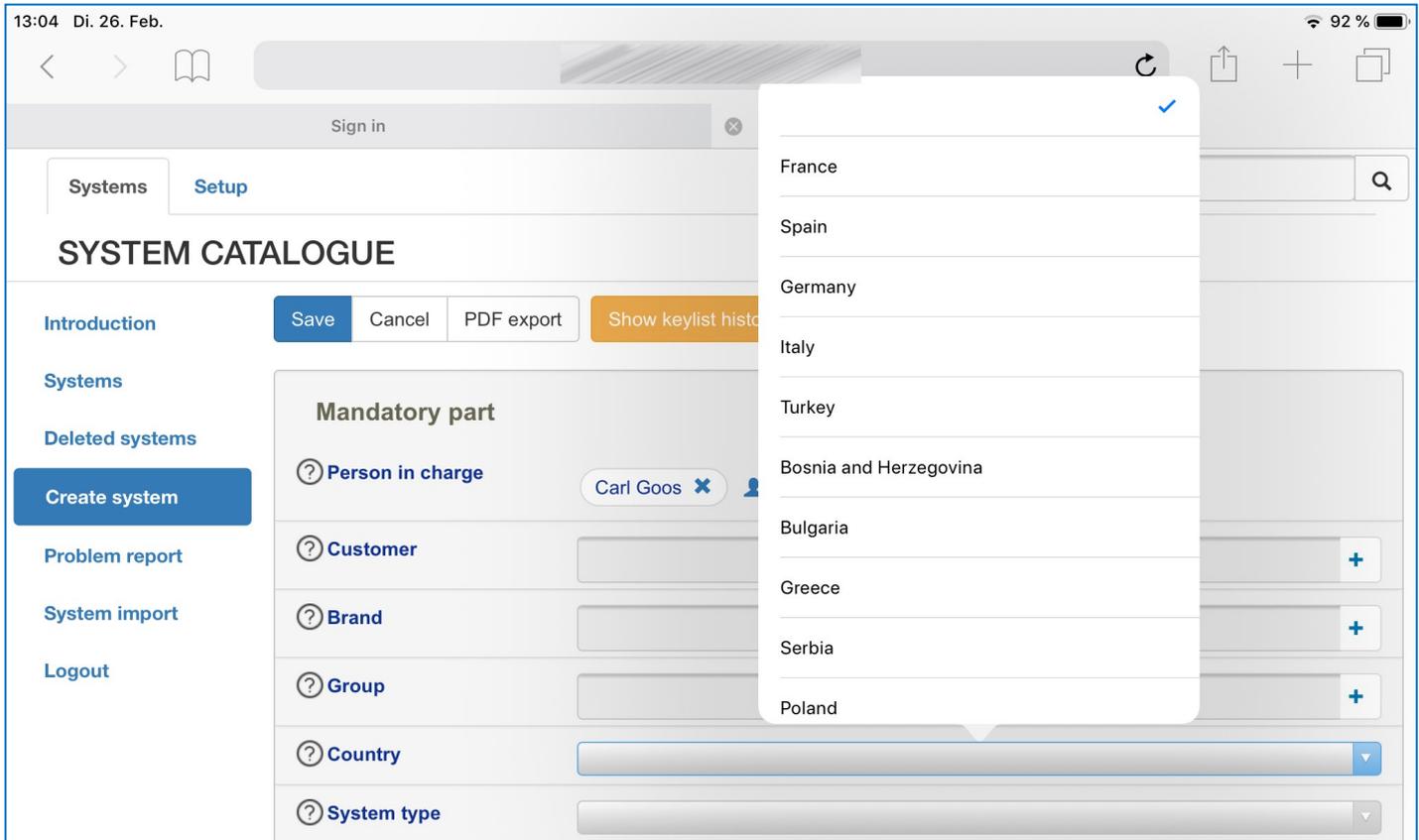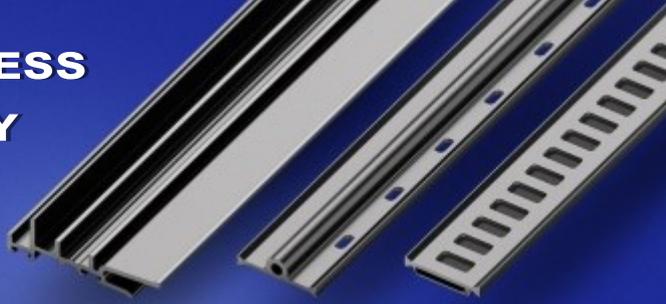
The local focus to the different systems also plays its part while creating a new system in the SysCat – as in this example on a tablet. Every system needs to be assigned to a country so TIS knows at a glance at which location the customer processes this specific system.

requirement for Dupoyet: "One of the challenges was that it had to be easy and flexible enough to use for people more sales dedicated. On business trips, when they are on the plane or inside the customer's factory, they need to have an easy access to information without losing time. That's also why the offline function was something we needed". Carl Goos, CEO at ITWU and main consultant for this project reflects the conception of the SysCat as follows: "The challenge on the technical side was to find a good balance between 'easy according to usability' and 'complex according to information content'."

Tailored to the employees' needs

The application is on the one hand designed for sales people and on the other hand for the technical designers at TIS Division. It is flexible and available for any web-enabled device e.g. a smartphone or tablet. It can be used either online or offline as a local replica for instance on the user's notebook which means it can be made available everywhere. So, for a salesperson visiting a customer's company, a connection to the internet is no longer required. "When you are visiting a customer who wants to improve his existing systems, very often we notice that we are able to find knowledge and information about his systems even faster than him, now," Dupoyet recalls.

Due to the connection between the SysCat and a global product catalog of Technoform, the entries of the SysCat always contain up-to-date information about the strips and the according frame systems. The Grid which ITWU used for the SysCat

enables the user to filter the whole database by a range of different specifications, e.g. by customer, brand, system type, or measurements of the systems. These various filters are one of Dupoyet's favorite features: "The easy filters are extremely useful for the user. And it's very fast, even if there is a lot of data involved. You can filter anything and find the needed information instantly."

Furthermore, the possibility to export certain customer data from within the SysCat to a PDF file was essential for TIS Division and its customers. For preparation of the consulting interview, sales people can now export the relevant entries of the customer's systems to PDF and present this information during the interview without the possible danger of revealing sensible data of other clients.
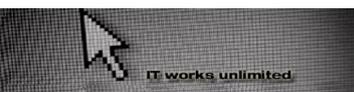
IT works unlimited GmbH & Co. KG
Grüner Weg 4   33098 Paderborn

Tel.: +49 5251 28816-0
Fax: +49 5251 28816-29

Homepage: www.itwu.de
E-Mail: info@itwu.de

SUCCESS STORY
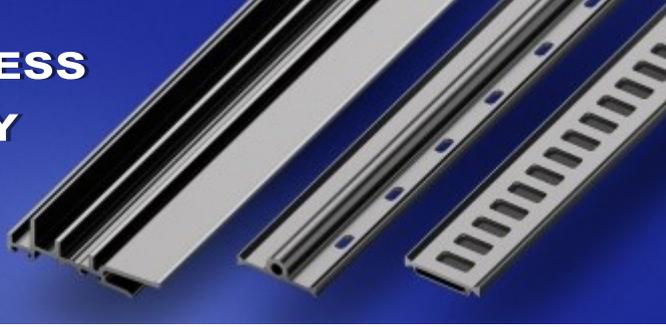
"When you deal with such amounts of customer data the need and the responsibility for protecting the privacy of these customers is immense. Therefore our employees had to be able to work with this kind of sensible information for one customer - apart from the data of other clients within the SysCat - as well," explains Dupoyet.

If a special customer's system has no entry in the SysCat, it can be easily added, while additions can always be checked by a person responsible to ensure a high quality of information: Every time a colleague adds a new system or key value, Dupoyet, as the general director, gets notified, so he can prove and correct the addition if needed. It is also possible to complement the entries with a lot of additional information, like sketches of the suitable strips to visualize the products to the customers or helping notes for

Nicolas Dupoyet – General Director, TE Bautec France - TIS:

"Instead of looking into ten different places in different databases you just select the systems, customer or group you are looking for and then by one click you can export a PDF that you can either print or keep on your computer which is very fast and time saving."

colleagues. "The SysCat is like an open door for exchange. And I hope that the tool will motivate the people to contact other employees who has developed this very special system, to discuss about it and maybe to learn from each other." Dupoyet tells. Especially for newcomers to the technical team the SysCat can serve as a guide book to the various systems and the

referring products of TIS. They can learn a lot simply by analyzing and comparing the existing system types and the suitable insulating profiles. "One of the other targets of this tool is to grow the knowledge of our teams within Technoform in order to always provide better services to our customers," says Dupoyet. Due to the long period of accessing needed information in the different local ways, it will still take some time and effort to convince TIS Division employees to change over to the new solution. But the SysCat has already a high acceptance as a result of its intuitive user interface which minimizes the need for long introductions.

Know-how and great teamwork
Since about three years ITWU has been a reliable partner to implement IT-solutions for Technoform. So, it seemed likely for the colleagues of the international IT-team to
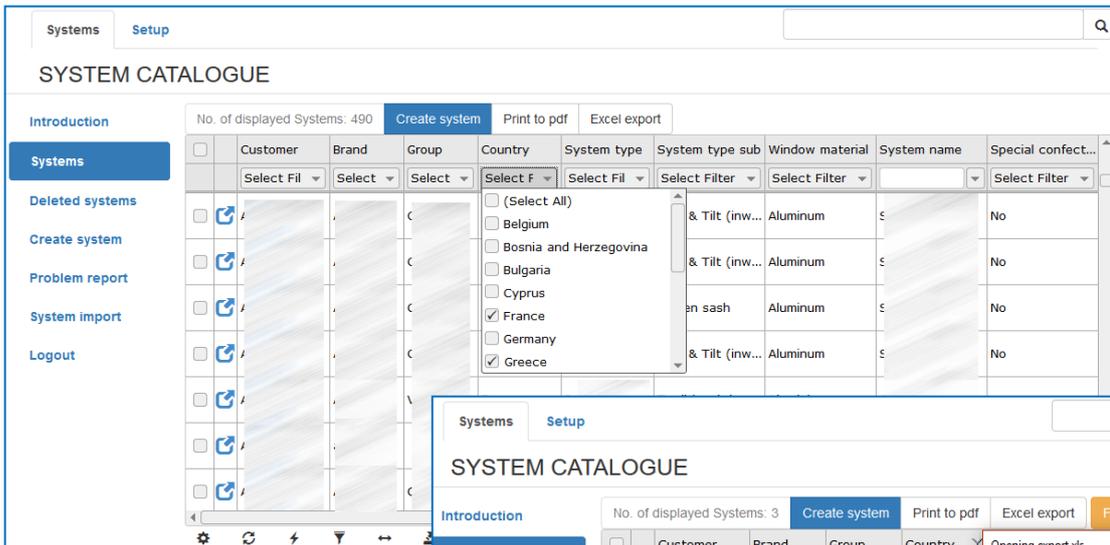

A Grid gives an overview of every single entry within the SysCat and can be flexibly customized to the needs of the current user in many different ways, e.g. by filtering, deleting or sorting of the columns.

Selected entries of the SysCat can be exported to PDF or Excel by a simple click. This way, during a customer appointment the focus stays on the data that is important for the customer while the data of other clients remain secured within the SysCat.
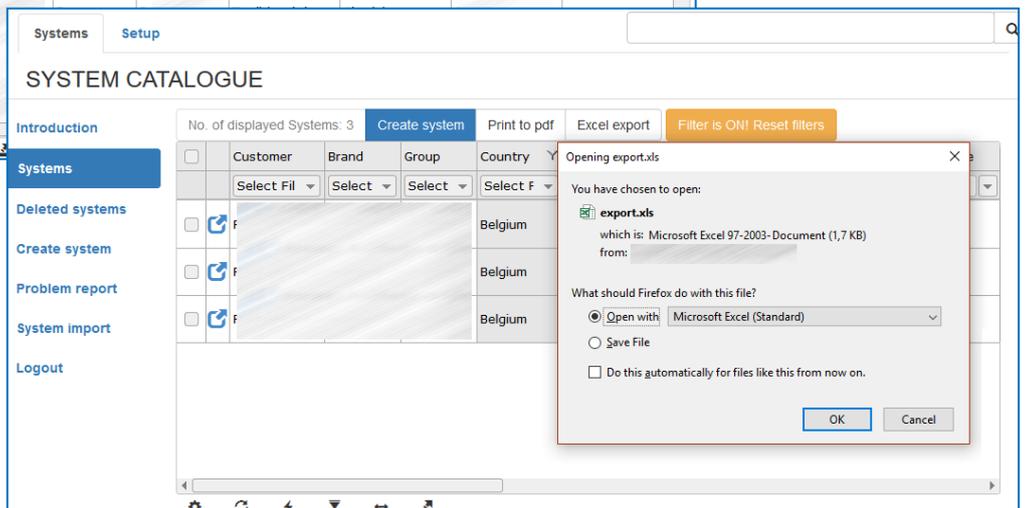
Reference customer: Technoform

Industry: plastics processing

Project:
System Catalog

SUCCESS STORY

www.itwu.de
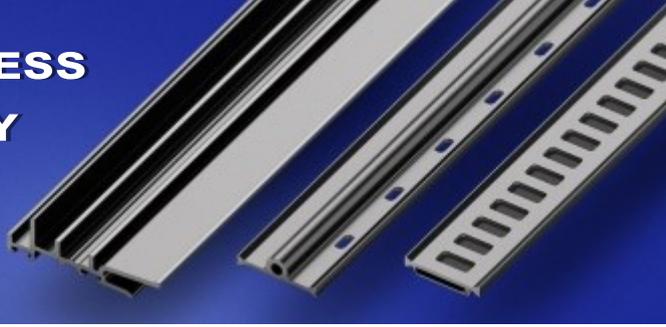
recommend ITWU to the TIS-Team in France for this project. "One of the reasons was the proximity of ITWU to Technoform in terms of understanding our company. A second one was the different types of competence that we found inside ITWU – some related to business logic, some related to web-development. I think, this combination plus the knowledge of our company were the decisive factors", Dupoyet explains.

During the initial phase that took about 1.5 years TE Bautec France discussed the concept and exchanged ideas concerning the expected application with many TIS colleagues in different countries. Following this, ITWU was assigned to develop it technically. The development took about 20 man-days. "In the development phase we really tried to concrete our vision of the

solution and it was thanks to the very good work of ITWU who accompanied us in this phase with good advices and different points of view that the phase turned out to be very constructive," Dupoyet re-capitulates. "At some point there were problems with the timing but I guess when two parties are in such a close dialogue with each other these kinds of difficulties are practically inevitable."

Goos adds: "During a development project we are always eager to get comprehensive and continuous feedback from our customers. That is the cornerstone to build applications that exactly fit the needs of our customers and their employees." The following step was the testing of the SysCat with a limited number of users and according to this, some modifications had to be made. The test phase took about

three months. After that the SysCat was launched.

At the moment, the TIS employees at TE Bautec France are still filling the SysCat with information about the various systems. There are two different approaches for this matter: Systems can be added manually or be imported automatically via a ZIP-file if special format requirements are considered. As a last step, ITWU will install the offline functionality. Dupoyet is very content with the cooperation: "It worked very well. Inside ITWU we found different technical competencies and this combination was one of the key factors for the project's success".

Joint projects in the future
Nicolas Dupoyet is absolutely satisfied

Numerous and detailed help pop-ups within the system entries guarantee a problem-free use of the SysCat, even for new TIS employees.

IT works unlimited GmbH & Co. KG
Grüner Weg 4   33098 Paderborn
Tel.: +49 5251 28816-0
Fax: +49 5251 28816-29
Homepage: www.itwu.de
E-Mail: info@itwu.de
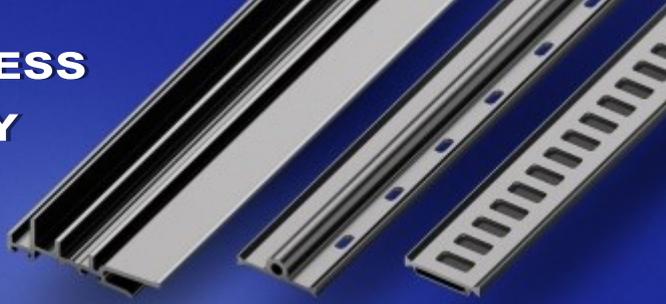
with the new solution: "I think we are on a very good way and for that we can be really grateful to the team of ITWU. Now it depends on the future involvement of the employees if the solution will be accepted throughout the company – but I'm deeply convinced it will work. The SysCat is a promising tool for the future." And that is why Dupoyet is sure there will be more cooperation with ITWU "In the context of the SysCat there will be continuous improvement and a lot of future development based on the wishes, needs and ideas of the people working with the tool." In these cases TIS will definitely count on the quick help of ITWU again. New features will be easy to integrate into the SysCat due to its open structure. And even the planned migration from IBM Notes to Microsoft Office 365 within TIS Division holds no difficulties for the solution and the ITWU Team according to Goos. So the SysCat will remain a solid frame for Technoform Insulation Solutions' extensive knowledge – also in the long run.

Carl Goos - CEO, ITWU:

"Although the SysCat is originally developed as a Notes application we have all the needed resources at hand to easily integrate it into Office 365."

June 2019

Company profile: TECHNOFORM GROUP

TECHNOFORM GROUP is a modern and innovative family company with about 1.300 employees. It is represented by 13 production sites and 45 sales offices worldwide with headquarters located in Kassel, Germany. Since 1993 it is divided into three branches: Technoform Insulation solutions for windows, doors, and facades, Thermal edge bond solutions for insulating glass and Tailored engineering plastics solutions. All of the three branches develop and manufacture specific plastic parts. Technoform Insulation solutions is dedicated to the creation of insulation solutions and special components for windows, doors and facades. Thermal edge bond solutions creates thermal optimized hybrid plastic spacers for insulating glass and Tailored engineering plastics solutions is specialized in creating tailored plastic profile solutions for various fields of application.

IT works unlimited GmbH & Co. KG
Grüner Weg 4   33098 Paderborn

Tel.: +49 5251 28816-0
Fax: +49 5251 28816-29

Homepage: www.itwu.de
E-Mail: info@itwu.de