Automating System Copies Pays Off for REHAU within First Year
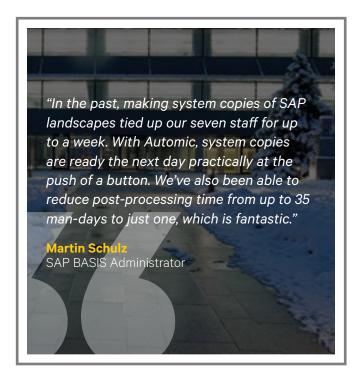
REHAU is a premium brand for polymer-based solutions and a global leader in the construction, automotive and industrial sectors. It started producing mostly individual products for footwear and automotive companies in the early 1950s, but its offering has since expanded to include complex system and service solutions for the construction, furniture and automotive sectors as well as a number of other applications.

With a catalog of more than 40,000 products, the REHAU Group has grown internationally over the last few decades, with annual sales amounting to more than €2.8 billion. It is an independent family-owned company that employs around 17,000 staff in 170 countries around the world, all of whom are committed to ensuring its success.

Business Challenge

SAP software plays a key role in IT at REHAU, with over 120 SAP systems used for delivering shared services. Like other companies that run SAP, REHAU need to copy their production SAP environments on a regular basis, so that testing and development work can be performed on the 'real' systems without impacting actual production systems.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE
- Reduce SAP system copy run times
- Eliminate manual pre- and post-processing steps
- Enhance quality of data fro SAP dev and test teams
- Enhance quality of data for SAP non-production systems

AUTOMIC SOLUTION
- Centralized administration and monitoring
- Parallel execution of copies within SAP systems and within the landscape
- Reusable workflows

CUSTOMER BENEFITS
- System Copy time reduced from 35 man-days to just one
- 3x as many system copies can now be produced in the same amount of time

"In the past, making system copies of SAP landscapes tied up our seven staff for up to a week. With Automic, system copies are ready the next day practically at the push of a button. We've also been able to reduce post-processing time from up to 35 man-days to just one, which is fantastic."

Martin Schulz
SAP BASIS Administrator

The closer to the original a system copy is, the more representative the test results are. This decreases the likelihood of nasty surprises when transferring to the production environments. REHAU regularly performs system copies to ensure thorough testing of system updates ('refreshes'), but also so that they can copy the entire SAP solution landscape in a parallel and synchronized way.

Martin Schulz, SAP Basis Administrator for REHAU, comments: "There are huge costs involved in making SAP system copies. Almost 4,000 staff around the world are able to access our SAP systems directly. If these systems are down, that means a number of departments simply cannot function – and that has certainly been the case in the past." The problem with system copy doesn't lie in the copying process itself, as this can be done in just a few hours. It's really in the manual post-processing, which entails adjusting parameters, users and rights, profiles, system settings and interfaces.

Depending on the SAP system, this post-processing can take two to three days and can sometimes even stretch to a whole week. This means that all seven members of the SAP BASIS team get tied up with the process. Schulz continues: "Whenever we've had to copy an entire system in the past, it's required more than a week of our whole team's undivided attention due to the number of manual steps and dependencies involved."

Historically, system copies were only carried out in extreme emergencies because of their sheer cost. In these instances, it wasn't just the SAP BASIS Administrator that was tied up: "Departments like Test and Development cannot access the non-production SAP system while the copy is being carried out," Schulz explains.

The Automic Solution

"We have been looking for a solution to help us automate the system copy process for years," says Rudi Scharf, Head of SAP BASIS and Infrastructure at REHAU. "The main reason for this was to reduce post-processing times: even specialist departments were getting tied up in post-processing, in addition to the SAP BASIS team."

Rudi Scharf's team eventually found what they were looking for in a solution offered by the Business Automation specialist Automic. The solution, Automated System Copy for SAP, automates the system copy process almost completely. One advantage for REHAU here was that their IT team had already been using Automic's platform, which is the technical foundation for the system copy solution. REHAU have been using Automic Workload Automation as their principal scheduling technology for complex job chains across all platforms: in a single day, REHAU uses Automic to manage around 32,000 jobs.

REHAU expanded their use of Automic's platform to include the Automated System Copy for SAP module. The running costs for the additional module were already covered by the existing maintenance contract. REHAU's management team were quickly convinced of the benefits, and so Automic's Automated System Copy for SAP solution came into force in June 2012. Because the REHAU team already had the necessary expertise from already using the Automic platform, only minimal training was required. Rudi Scharf's team made their first system copies just two weeks after attending a workshop. It quickly became clear that Automic would fulfill and even exceed REHAU's high expectations.
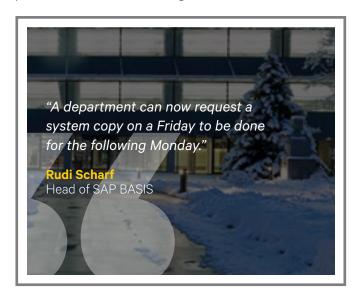
Benefits

With Automic, SAP system copies can be planned and executed in parallel mode. This reduces manual intervention to a minimum, allowing staff to continue with their day-to-day work as normal. Time is saved, mistakes caused by human error are avoided and staff are freed up to work on higher value tasks.

The Automic solution also increases visibility thanks to centralized administration and monitoring. The IT team have since carried out 88 SAP system copies. Rudi Scharf knows that "we're a medium-sized company, so if we had wanted to do this using standard SAP applications we wouldn't have been able to afford it. Without the help of Automic we would only have been able to produce twenty copies, at most."

This success story spread through the departments at REHAU. Whereas system copies had previously only been made in emergencies, a department can now request a system copy on a Friday to be done for the following Monday. For Rudi Scharf, "the great thing is that we can actually meet that deadline. That wouldn't have been feasible in the past: it would have needed too much time and money." The copy quality is also better with Automic: the process is automated, so nothing can be forgotten.

Rudi Scharf went on to comment: "Automic is an affordable solution that offers a very high degree of automation. SAP has been trying for a while now to establish its own system copy automation solutions, but the alternatives on offer at the moment are less effective. As an existing customer, implementing the Automic Automated System Copy for SAP module has already paid off within the first year – and there are no additional maintenance costs. The Automic platform is strategically positioned here at REHAU, and it's been the best possible solution in terms of the goals we want to achieve."

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> **Rudi Scharf**
> Head of SAP BASIS

For more information or product demonstration please visit www.automic.com