



Automating Application Releases Keeps Austrian Pension Provider Pensionsversicherungsanstalt at the Forefront of Innovation

Pensionsversicherungsanstalt (PVA) is Austria's largest pension provider, administering the retirement pensions for millions of citizens. The self-governed organization employs almost 5,000 staff, both at its headquarters in Vienna and across its network of regional offices.

To better serve customers, lower the cost of pension administration and keep pace with emerging pension reform regulations, PVA has developed 'zepta', a new pensions service that customer service staff access through the PVA portal. Designed using service-oriented architecture (SOA) principles, zepta offers users many features including a new calculation engine that can determine individuals' pension contributions, eligibility and pension reimbursements.

Zepta is an application suite running on an IBM WebSphere platform. It was built using Vaadin and Java, with Camunda managing integrated business process flows. Replacing mainframe-based legacy applications, this flexible SOA-based platform provides the extra agility needed to respond to fast changing business demands. Consequently, PVA development teams are continually creating new zepta enhancements as well as maintenance refreshes.

To move these enhancements and refreshes between development and production, PVA has established seven deployment stages updates. The company's development, test, quality assurance (QA) and user acceptance teams were under pressure to integrate enhancements with existing applications at each stage. The problem was a reliance on manual deployment techniques, such as admin scripts to create application packages. A lack of deployment transparency and visibility in this labor-intensive approach also threatened to increase costs, result in business downtime and lead to non-compliance.

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Pensionsversicherungsanstalt

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

- Replace manual and admin script-based deployments.
- Lower the cost and time required to release apps.
- Ensure application release processes comply with corporate governance.
- Improve consistency when configuring different environments.

AUTOMIC SOLUTION

- Automated management of entire application release lifecycle.
- Advanced controls for scheduling of application releases.
- Centralized monitoring and tracking of package builds and release processes.
- Delivered comprehensive audit and reporting of deployments.

CUSTOMER BENEFITS

- Enhanced customer satisfaction and quality of service levels.
- Faster delivery of new application functionality to business users allowing more time for testing.
- Lowered deployment costs and increased staff productivity.
- Led to 6x increase in frequency of application releases for testing.

Walter Schimpelsberger, responsible for operation of Automic products at PVA, explains, "Packages were defined manually each time we built a release. This impacted deployment timescales and the quality of releases. Releases were then deployed to production during the night and at weekends. The entire process also involved a lot of back-and-forth between development and operations teams."

To put the issue into context, it took PVA up to two weeks to promote a major release into production. It took one developer one hour to search and collect package artifacts, send them to the operations team and have the release deployed on a development

server. As a result, PVA executed a maximum of three releases per day on test platforms. “A developer was also monitoring the screen throughout to check for failure notifications and to identify the source of the failure—not a productive use of their time,” says Schimpelsberger.

Fully automated releases deliver speed and control

PVA implemented Automatic Release Automation to fully automate deployments, based on using visual workflows. The solution also automates other administration tasks, like supporting the test and development systems, and setting up and configuring server environments. By orchestrating the application releases process, Automatic gives PVA the two factors it craves most during development: speed and control.

“Automatic is transforming the way PVA develops and releases applications—we can launch higher quality applications more quickly, and there’s now more time for testing,” says Schimpelsberger. “We can quickly define our software packages, assemble them, identify the promotion paths and administer strict approval processes. We’ve also been able to include Subversion, Jenkins, Maven, HP Quality Center and our own internal tools in the release management lifecycle. This all means we can track the packages as they travel through the development phases. Thanks to Automatic, our application releases are fast and automated—with fewer people involved.”

Automation has significantly increased PVA’s IT administration and development productivity. Take the example of a new PVA web application that needs to be deployed. When the developer is ready, packages are uploaded directly to the artifact repository; the new components are added and the deployment is ready to go. The web application deployment can be scheduled automatically to occur at night and at weekends. And there is full release management and control throughout, with approvals preventing unauthorized deployments, and database administrators being notified the moment database scripts fail.


On a typical day, PVA will create three packages using Automatic Release Automation, each package containing up to 18 components. Snapshot builds allow users to compare configurations between packaged items up to three times per day/night. Prior to Automatic, these were run once every two days.

A more collaborative working environment between stakeholders has also emerged. Roll-based access for teams from Release Management, Operations, Project Management and Developers allows them to zone in to their separate areas of responsibility within the individual application releases. “There are far fewer discussions now between Development and Operations, because the artifact repository is usually right first time,” says Schimpelsberger.

individual application releases. “There are far fewer discussions now between Development and Operations, because the artifact repository is usually right first time,” says Schimpelsberger. PVA development productivity has increased immensely using Automatic Release Automation, as these metrics indicate:

- Lowered time needed to build, deliver and deploy packages from one hour to 20 minutes.
- Improved quality and speed of application releases: snapshot builds performed three times a day instead of once every two days.
- Led to six fold increase in the frequency of new features released to test: from one day previously to four hours.
- Automated identification of defects saves 45 minutes per release, due to source code being moved more rapidly from one environment to the next.

Schimpelsberger concludes, “How would I summarize the advantages of Automatic? PVA’s applications are being launched to market more quickly and to a higher quality; we have fewer resources managing the release process; and errors are few and far between. Governance has also been improved. I can’t imagine how we coped before.”



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