

# BALLUFF

sensors worldwide

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## Overview

### The need

Balluff knew that slow access to finance and business reports threatened productivity and potential growth. How could executives gain fast insight into critical data to make better business decisions?

### The solution

The company moved its SAP Business Warehouse to IBM® DB2® with BLU Acceleration, running on IBM Power Systems™ with IBM AIX® and IBM PowerHA®.

### The benefit

Balluff achieved 98 percent faster access to business data, 50 percent faster response times in SAP ERP and 7x faster access to documents and near real-time access to essential information.

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## Balluff gains fast insight into critical data for better business decisions

*Game-changing boost to information delivery with IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration*

Family-owned Balluff GmbH, headquartered in Neuhausen, Germany, is a world-leading manufacturer of sensor solutions, employing about 2,750 people in 50 countries. With sophisticated technology, cutting-edge electronics products, application-specific customer solutions and highly trained service staff, Balluff achieved annual sales of EUR 335 million in 2013.

Over a period of rapid business growth, Balluff identified that it needed to speed up information availability to support its sales and business development functions with real-time information for better insight into markets and customers.

Bernhard Herzog, Team Manager Information Technology SAP at Balluff says, “Balluff relies on SAP solutions to manage the business, including SAP Business Warehouse for data analysis and reporting. As the business grew, data delivery slowed down, and without timely, accurate information we risked making poor investment decisions, and were unable to deliver the best possible service to our customers.

“To release the true potential of the business, Balluff wanted to transform the speed and reliability of its enterprise information management, and we turned to IBM for help.”

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*Balluff has significantly accelerated business reporting and information delivery. “We cut report runtimes by up to 98 percent thanks to IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration technology – without changing operations processes or investing in new hardware or software. We were impressed how easy boosting database performance can be,” says Bernhard Herzog, Team Manager Information Technology SAP, Balluff.*

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## Solution components

### Software

- IBM® AIX®
- IBM DB2® for Linux, UNIX and Windows with BLU Acceleration
- IBM PowerHA® SystemMirror® for AIX
- IBM PowerVM®
- IBM System Storage® SAN Volume Controller
- IBM Tivoli® Storage FlashCopy® Manager
- IBM Tivoli Storage Manager

### Hardware

- IBM Power® 750 with POWER7+™ processors
- IBM FlashSystem™ 840
- IBM XIV®
- IBM Tape Library TS3500 and TS4500

### Applications

- SAP Business Warehouse
- SAP ERP
- SAP ERP Human Capital Management
- SAP Customer Relationship Management
- SAP NetWeaver Enterprise Portal
- SAP Process Integration

### Services

- IBM System and Technology Group Lab Services
  - IBM Software Group Services
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## Instant access to critical business data

The Balluff team was not interested in incremental changes; they wanted game-changing improvements in information delivery. The company's SAP Business Warehouse solution serves around 500 concurrent users, and the aim was to transform personal productivity and enable real-time enterprise-wide information insight.

The team evaluated possible options, including SAP HANA, SAP Business Warehouse Accelerator, and IBM DB2 for Linux, UNIX and Windows with BLU Acceleration, looking at price, complexity and predicted system performance. The company selected IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration as the most effective way for Balluff to achieve its business objectives.

Bernd Dümmel, Team Manager SAP BW and application development at Balluff, says, "IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration is the ideal solution for us because we can gain new insights into business data more rapidly. Deploying IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration was a low-risk project; implementation was quick and easy without affecting availability. IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration is already included in our IBM DB2 licenses, and we can operate it without additional training, and the investment and operating costs are much lower than other solutions."

The new solution has substantially enhanced the productivity of the sales teams by providing accurate, instant information for better-informed decision making.

Bernd Dümmel explains, "Since we moved to IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration, our sales teams can react much quicker to fast-changing market demands. For example, we cut database run time of complex reports by up to 98 percent. Across all business reports, we achieved savings of 30 percent on average. As a result, staff can access up-to-date information more efficiently and the SAP Business Warehouse application feels more responsive than in the past. Data management tasks are also much faster now, saving us a significant time in database administration and data loading and pre-processing."

Using IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration, Balluff aims to boost sales activities, and ultimately enhance business results.

Bernhard Herzog says, "It is a great advantage for our business users that they can generate ad-hoc reports much more quickly. Our sales team relies on rapid access to sales figures, and managers run many reports a day to optimize our sales activity and keep up to date with the latest numbers."

## Moving in-flight to real-time data

Balluff accomplished all these benefits without disrupting users, and by building on existing IBM DB2 software and skills. The implementation for the biggest database was completed online and over one night. IBM supported Balluff throughout the project from planning to execution, including database administration.

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— Bernd Dümmel, Team Manager SAP BW and application development, Balluff

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Bernhard Herzog elaborates, “As long-time user of IBM DB2, it is much easier for us to manage IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration than completely new database systems. In times of growth and with limited IT resources, it is important that our IT staff can work as productively as possible. We already have established processes to operate and manage IBM DB2 – all these routines can still be used with IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration.”

Bernd Dümmel, says, “The deployment of IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration went very smoothly. No customizations to the database tables or our SAP Business Warehouse application were required. We could even move our data online, without disrupting our business users.

“The collaboration with IBM was excellent. We received great support from IBM Software Group Services. They were highly competent and always knew exactly what to do next.”

### **Using performance benefits to drive business benefits**

As well as providing near real-time data, IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration offers significant technical performance benefits that help Balluff achieve greater return on investment.

Even though Balluff already used data compression technologies, the solution achieved a further 14 percent compression. In turn, the smaller databases enabled faster backups, cutting backup time by 30 percent. The company also saved storage and back space, and reduced backup data volumes by 30 percent. Further, Balluff improved batch mode data processing by 25 percent with IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration.

The performance improvements enable Balluff to extract greater value from its technology investments, handling greater workload and larger data volumes from within a smaller system footprint.

Bernd Dümmel explains, “For example, our nightly batch jobs were running longer and longer. Thanks to DB2 with BLU Acceleration, we can now ensure that all the data is processed and made available on time. This innovative solution allows us to easily cover future business growth even as we deploy new information services.”

### **Faster SAP ERP systems with new technology**

Balluff runs its SAP software on IBM Power®, which it chose to extend with two new IBM Power 750 servers featuring IBM POWER7+™ processors. For maximum flexibility and resilience, the two servers are configured as a private cloud, which is able to continue operating even if one of the systems is unavailable. Balluff uses IBM PowerHA SystemMirror® for the IBM AIX operating system to provide very high levels of data and system protection, helping to ensure maximum availability of SAP ERP and related mission-critical business applications.

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Bernhard Herzog remarks, “The private cloud platform, based on IBM technology, enables us to set up new systems much more quickly than before, improving our business agility and making sure that we can react quickly to new requirements. For example, it is very easy for us to add a sandbox system if we want to test new features, helping to speed our time to market and support business opportunities.”

Balluff takes advantage of the micro-partitioning feature provided by IBM AIX to use the available processor resources as efficiently as possible. The advanced virtualization technology combined with DB2’s consolidation capabilities lets Balluff assign resources dynamically as systems grow, allowing the company to optimize the performance of all systems at all time.

Bernhard Herzog says, “The IBM team migrated our systems and updated our operating systems and database software very efficiently without issues. We were surprised to see how rapidly they had moved all systems over to our new servers and releases. We could never have completed this upgrade so quickly without professional help from experienced IBM specialists.”

At Balluff, IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration was implemented without additional investment in licenses or hardware. IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration was smoothly and seamlessly integrated with the existing environment, and no operational processes needed to be changed to take advantage of the new functionality.

Bernhard Herzog adds, “Today, sales staff have immediate access to real-time information about customer turnover and other important indicators. With faster access to key business data, sales managers at Balluff can gain a better overview, sales reps can improve customer service and the company can increase sales.”

### **Managing data for speed and reliability**

Balluff deploys a number of integrated IBM technologies to manage data from both the SAP ERP and other business systems, including IBM System Storage® SAN Volume Controller storage and IBM XIV® Storage System devices. Just as IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration has transformed business insight, Balluff also looked to improve the speed of information delivery throughout the company, and implemented IBM FlashSystem™ 840 solid-state memory solutions.

Bernhard Herzog explains, “In the past, waiting times slowed down workflows and staff had to change between different tasks to avoid further delays. With IBM FlashSystem, we improved access to documents by a factor of five, accelerated SAP ERP batch operations by a factor of seven, and halved response times in SAP ERP dialog mode.

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### **Protecting data if the worst happens**

As the value of business data increases, it becomes even more important to ensure that it is fully protected with automated, reliable backup processes – and, should disaster strike, know that the data is quickly recoverable.

To meet these needs, Balluff implemented IBM Tivoli® Storage Manager with an IBM Tape Library. With IBM Tivoli Storage FlashCopy® Manager, Balluff uses the snapshots functionality of the IBM XIV Storage System to create application-aware snapshots in seconds. This enables Balluff to reduce its restore time significantly and improve data protection for its most important systems.

Bernhard Herzog comments, “In the past, it would have taken about three hours to restore mission-critical data from tape. With IBM Tivoli Storage FlashCopy Manager we are now able to create three backups of our two largest systems per day. This not only improves data protection without slowing down applications, it also helps us to recover data much faster than before. With snapshots managed by FlashCopy Manager, we can recover directly from disk in about one minute.”

### **Optimizing technology to support business objectives**

The Balluff team is dedicated to continuous optimization of its IT infrastructure as part of wider support for its business ambitions. By maximizing technical performance, Balluff can avoid over-investment and cut operational costs while delivering enhanced, near real-time information to executives.

Bernd Dümmel concludes, “Based on our success, Balluff is working with IBM to optimize the database environment further. We are already looking forward to the next release of IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration, when even more SAP applications and database objects will be supported to speed up additional systems.”

Bernhard Herzog adds, “IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration has helped Balluff transform the speed and reliability of its enterprise information delivery, giving executives fast insight into critical information to help us seize business opportunities.”

### **For more information**

To learn more about IBM DB2 with BLU Acceleration, contact your IBM sales representative or visit: [ibm.com/software/db2](http://ibm.com/software/db2)



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