Business Challenge

SIFI was beginning to eye international markets, yet its manual business processes could not scale easily to handle the projected workload. How could SIFI sharpen focus and streamline for growth?

Transformation

SIFI worked with H.T. High Technology to deploy cutting-edge SAP solutions, creating digital workflows with embedded mobile capabilities, hosted on IBM® Cloud™ bare metal servers certified by SAP.

Luca Velardita
SAP ERP Manager
SIFI

Business benefits:

Saves
thousands of Euros every month by consolidating 17 systems into one

24/7
mobile data access accelerates decision-making

Supports
successful global expansion by automating business processes

SIFI

Sharpens its focus on international expansion with IBM and SAP

Ophthalmic specialist SIFI S.p.A. manufactures and markets therapeutic solutions to treat most common eye diseases, offering pharmaceuticals, medical devices and nutraceuticals to pharmacies, clinics and hospitals. The company employs approximately 370 people, generating group sales of more than €65 million.

"Our teams across all departments have provided enthusiastic feedback on the new SAP S/4HANA and IBM Cloud bare metal servers deployment."

Luca Velardita, SAP ERP Manager, SIFI

Share this

Bringing international expansion challenges into sharp focus

As the leading Italian company in the highly-specialized ophthalmic sector, SIFI is constantly faced with complex challenges. From performing rigorous quality checks to ensuring the prompt and efficient delivery of its products, the firm is on a continuous path to excellence.

What happened when SIFI decided to bring this excellence outside of its national borders? Fresh challenges arose. For SIFI's international expansion plans to succeed, every aspect of its business processes would need to be as sharp as possible. In particular, SIFI depends on rigorous product quality checks – crucial in the ophthalmic sector – and full reporting on manufacturing and financial processes.

Many of the company's business processes were essentially manual. Staff were often busy performing low-value administration tasks for which they used a total of 17 different systems. In addition, system performance was declining, older hardware was costly to maintain, and legacy solutions were not able to support multiple languages or currencies – clearly a significant barrier to international growth.

Luca Velardita, SAP ERP Manager at SIFI, comments: "To help us break into foreign markets, we wanted to improve our speed and quality of insight, to support more meaningful decision-making. We would also want to manage new issues such as compliance with international industry standards, additional languages, and multiple currencies. It was time to look for the best technology and the most experienced partners to assist us in this exciting journey."

Targeting digital transformation

SIFI established criteria to help it identify the right enablement partners, including those with demonstrable pharmaceutical sector expertise, technical skills, and willingness to commit on a long-term basis.

For its transformation journey, SIFI selected IBM and IBM Business Partner H.T. High Technology. The first step was to choose SAP S/4HANA as the strategic business solution. SAP S/4HANA acts as an intelligent ERP solution that integrates and manages accounting, controlling, purchase, sales and distribution, warehouse management, business intelligence and mobile order entry processes.
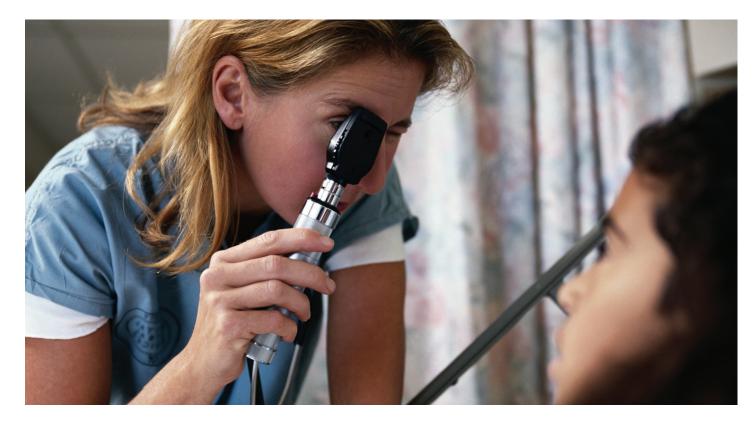
SAP S/4HANA supports multiple languages and currencies, provides enhanced mobile capabilities, and delivers very high analytics performance. With the addition of SAP Fiori® apps, SIFI will be able to provide full mobile application access, from phones, tablets and laptops, streamlining and simplifying the user experience, and optimizing business efficiency.

To support its proposed environment, SIFI adopted a cloud strategy designed to remove on-premises technical complexity wherever possible. To start the journey, IBM and H.T. High Technology developed a hybrid cloud environment to enable the company to focus on its core business excellence with infrastructure administration delegated to experts.

SIFI retained its on-premises IBM Power Systems™ servers for specific manufacturing applications, and selected IBM Cloud bare metal servers for its new SAP S/4HANA deployment.

SAP S/4HANA enables SIFI to digitize and automate many processes that were previously manual. For example, in the past, warehouse management was entirely manual and took considerable time to complete, slowing down important associated activities such as production and sales.

Now, SIFI benefits from a modern, intuitive mobile interface which simplifies and enhances all warehouse processes, enabling operators to manage activities and provide feedback on-the-fly.

Additionally, the SAP and IBM solutions enable SIFI to optimize planning processes, as they help the company respond to customer requests in a timely manner, providing reliable delivery windows that ensure pharmacies and hospitals never run out of stock.

IBM Cloud bare metal servers provide a dedicated, single-tenant architecture that offers SIFI complete control over where and how data is managed, exchanged, and processed. The powerful IBM Cloud bare metal servers are certified by SAP for production SAP HANA and SAP NetWeaver workloads, allowing SIFI to deploy new SAP applications easily and quickly to this robust, highly scalable infrastructure solution.

Luca Velardita remarks: "The synergy between SIFI, IBM and H.T. High Technology was crucial to make this complex project a success. SIFI enlisted project managers, quality assurance managers, and project owners from several different departments, who could rapidly manage and solve any potential hurdles before they would have an impact on the overall installation.

"Thanks to this approach, and the invaluable skills of all those involved, we completed the implementation in just eight months, becoming one the first companies in Italy to deploy SAP S/4HANA – which made us even more proud of all our efforts."

"The synergy among the SIFI, IBM, and H.T. High Technology teams was crucial to make this project a success. Thanks to this approach, we completed the implementation in just eight months, becoming one the first companies in Italy to deploy SAP S/4HANA."

Luca Velardita,
SAP ERP Manager
SIFI

Looking to a crystal-clear future

With the hybrid cloud environment, SIFI has established a consolidated, low-administration IT landscape, optimizing its business processes on the latest SAP S/4HANA applications, replacing manual workflows with integrated digital processes. SIFI is also extending into mobile, enabling employees at every level to be productive wherever they are.

For example, SIFI has transformed its business-critical quality assurance processes, from production to warehousing. SIFI can now match each individual pharmaceutical product with its corresponding production information, with full traceability throughout the manufacturing, sales and logistics chain.

Similarly, integrated information flows help SIFI to optimize planning processes, from raw materials inventory to manufacturing efficiency and product delivery. With greater insight into future orders, current stock and production capacity, SIFI can better respond to customer requests and provide reliable delivery schedules, ensuring that pharmacies and hospitals are always fully served with vital medical supplies.
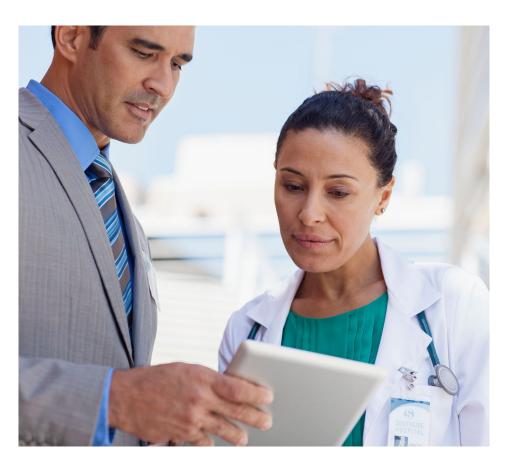
By choosing SAP S/4HANA, the company eliminated 17 independent solutions; by selecting IBM Cloud bare metal servers SIFI avoided significant capital expenditure. In addition, the company estimates that its operational costs have been reduced by thousands of euros on a monthly basis. Without on-premises administration and maintenance, IT staff can now devote precious time and resources to perform strategic development activities, while business managers gain access to real-time enterprise reporting.

The SAP and IBM solutions have cleared the way for SIFI's international expansion. As SAP S/4HANA supports many different languages and currencies – providing information that is fully trusted and certified – SIFI is now confident it can comply with international industry regulations and continue its ambitious global expansion, whatever the language and currency used in the target country.

Furthermore, the real-time capabilities of SAP S/4HANA enable executives and managers to access data anytime, anywhere, extract valuable insight, monitor business performance against budget, and take prompt action to update or alert managers to help maximize sales.

Luca Velardita concludes: "Our teams across all departments have provided enthusiastic feedback on the new SAP S/4HANA and IBM Cloud bare metal servers deployment. They can now focus on what's really important for them: international business growth and reaching out to serve new customers.

"We are extremely satisfied with the IBM and SAP solutions and are already planning to include SAP Lumira business intelligence and visualization capabilities, as well as considering how IBM Watson® can bring analytics and insight to our business. The IBM Cloud bare metal servers give us the scalability and capacity to enable new services with ease and simplicity, helping power our international objectives."

Learn more, connect with IBM [Twitter] [YouTube] **and SAP** [Twitter] [YouTube]