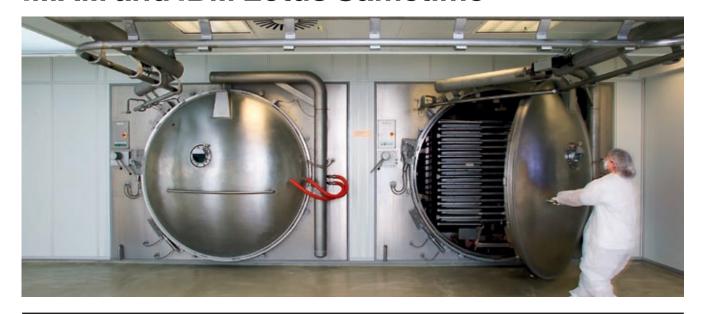# Niro gains easy access to information with IMAM and IBM Lotus Sametime

Overview

■ **The Challenge**

Because of the nature of its business, engineering design company Niro stores data in numerous repositories – including a Microsoft Dynamics AX ERP system, an Oracle document management system, and various IBM Lotus Domino databases. Accessing these data sources required client software and specialist knowledge, and it could be difficult for business users to get the information they needed, especially when they were out of the office.

■ **The Solution**

Niro deployed IMAM technology (www.imam.dk), an IBM Lotus Sametime solution from IBM Business Partner Semaphor (www.semaphor.dk). IMAM facilitates the creation of IM agents that can enable users to quickly query the company's databases and retrieve information via a simple Lotus Sametime interface.

■ **The Benefits**

IMAM can connect to almost any data source, which should eliminate the need for specialised client software and make it easier for users to access information. IMAM is designed to enable non-technical users to create IM agents quickly and easily, without any need for coding – Niro was able to set up three new IM agents on the day the solution went live. Lotus Sametime supports mobile devices, so Niro will be able to extend the solution to travelling sales teams.

> *"Creating robots in IMAM requires no programming knowledge at all. The solution provides a very simple, GUI-based process that non-technical staff can easily master – saving the cost of development and greatly increasing the speed of deployment."*
>
> Pernille Herold
> Lotus Notes Administrator
> Niro A/S

Niro A/S, part of the GEA Group, is a Danish company that specialises in the development, design and engineering of liquid and powder processing equipment for the manufacture of products in powder, granular or agglomerate form. Niro leads the GEA Group's Process Engineering Division, which employs 4,500 people in 50 countries; of these, around 500 work directly for Niro in Soeborg, Denmark.

The company relies on a number of key IT systems to support its operations. Microsoft Dynamics AX provides an ERP solution to handle supply chain management and production processes, while project documentation, drawings and blueprints are stored in an Oracle document management solution. In addition, the company uses a number of database-driven IBM Lotus Notes and Domino applications, as well as email and calendaring functions.

"With so many different data sources, it was becoming difficult for users to get access to all the information they needed," says Pernille Herold, Lotus Notes Administrator at Niro. "Most of the databases required client software, so users could not access the data they needed unless they were using a PC with the right software installed. Often, they had to ask their colleagues to get the information for

them, which was inefficient. Moreover, provisioning all the company's desktops and laptops with the latest client software was a headache for the IT department."

Finding a more flexible solution
Niro started looking for a solution that could provide a more flexible way to access its various data sources, and discovered IMAM (Instant Messaging Agent Manager), a solution for IBM Lotus Sametime from Semaphor, a Danish IBM Business Partner.

"IMAM is an application that integrates with Lotus Sametime and enables the design, execution and management of instant messaging agents, or chat robots," explains Tobias Fonsmark, Managing Director of Semaphor. "These agents can connect to almost any data source – JDBC/ODBC, XML, SQL, Lotus Domino, Google and so on – and extract information for the user."

Niro was already using Lotus Sametime 8 for presence awareness, instant messaging and Web conferencing, so the IMAM solution seemed an ideal way to maximise the value of its existing investment in the Sametime platform.

Pernille Herold comments: "All that our users need is a Lotus Sametime client; they use the simple interface to interact with the chat robots and request data from our databases. For example, we

have built a robot which enables users to check inventory in our Microsoft Dynamics AX ERP system – all the user has to do is type in a product code and the robot immediately queries the relevant database."

Niro has also designed IM agents that connect to the Oracle document management system and to the Lotus Notes and Domino calendaring system. The latter is particularly useful, enabling users to search the calendars of groups that they are not members of. They can simply type in the name of one of their colleagues and the agent will return a list of that person's appointments for that day.

Avoiding development costs

"IM agents for Lotus Sametime have been available for a while now, but building them always used to require expensive custom development work," says Pernille Herold. "By contrast, creating robots in IMAM requires no programming knowledge at all. The solution provides a very simple, GUI-based process that non-technical staff can easily master – saving the cost of development and greatly increasing the speed of deployment. In fact, on the same day that the solution went live, we were able to set up three new robots from scratch."

The simplicity of the IMAM solution means that Niro should be able to

design and deploy IM agents very rapidly in response to changing business needs. Instead of a lengthy development process, IMAM should reduce the lead time on the introduction of new functionalities to a matter of hours.

Niro's next step will be to leverage the mobile capabilities of Lotus Sametime by rolling out IMAM to users' mobile phones. The potential benefits of this rollout for the company's travelling sales teams are enormous – for example, it could enable them to check customer information, order status, current inventory and production scheduling even when they have no access to their PCs.

In the future, Niro also intends to extend the use of Lotus Sametime in other areas of the business – for example, by integrating the software with the company's IP telephony system.

"IMAM from Semaphor is an ingenious solution that leverages the simplicity and flexibility of Lotus Sametime to open up a world of possibilities for our business," concludes Pernille Herold. "With easier access to business data, our users and IT staff save time, and the ability to deploy new IM agents rapidly makes a significant improvement to our business agility."

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