POLUMANA

BLUEZONE

# CASE STUDY:
# **FÖRCH UNTERNEHMENSGRUPPE**

POLUMANA

CASE STUDY

# FÖRCH STRENGTHENS ITS MULTI-CHANNEL SALES APPROACH WITH ITS OWN SALES APP.

How a sales app at FÖRCH contributes to a meaningful orchestration of customer management and successful cross- and upselling through the sales team.

With its more than 100,000 workshop, assembly and fastening articles, Förch is one of Germany's leading suppliers of products for craftsmen and industry. The family-owned company currently has 3,500 employees working to satisfy more than 300,000 customers worldwide. In addition to its 34 sales locations in Germany and over 55 country representatives, FÖRCH relies on an efficient multi-channel sales approach and an effective e-commerce strategy.

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|---|---|
| **Company:** | Theo Förch GmbH & Co.KG |
| **Sector:** | Trade and Industry |
| **Products:** | Production and distribution of workshop, assembly and fastening articles |
| **Turnover:** | 514 million euros (2021) |
| **Employees:** | 3.500 |
| **Headquarters:** | Neuenstadt am Kocher (Baden-Württemberg, Germany) |
| **Project:** | Introduction of a new web store and a sales app in parallel with the conversion of the company's own ERP system to SAP S/4HANA. |

01.

## THE INITIAL SITUATION

The FÖRCH group of companies is a modern family business. The company's consistent growth since its founding has been due in part to strong internationalization and an increasingly complex IT infrastructure. One pressing issue, for example, was the standardization of the ERP systems used in the various countries.

At the same time, FÖRCH successfully relies on a multi-channel sales approach in the area of sales, which has to be optimized continuously and is mainly based on three pillars: the grown direct customer relationships of the approximately 2,000 sales representatives, the professional advice in the numerous sales locations and the reliable performance of the company's own web store.

02.

## THE PROJECT

In 2019, FÖRCH decided to replace its aging, self-developed ERP system with SAP S/4HANA, first in Germany and then successively the respective systems in other European national companies. Among other things, this should create the prerequisite for future digital solutions.

By future digital solutions, we mean contemporary tools such as an efficient and customer- friendly web store and a modern and reliable sales app. For the latter, FÖRCH opted for a solution based on the POLUMANA® app from BLUE-ZONE GmbH. In combination with a modern ERP system and the renewed webshop, a future-proof digital infrastructure was to be created.

03.

## THE RESULTS

The go-live of the new SAP system - including the conversion of the web store and the POLUMANA® sales app to S/4HANA - succeeded without any major complications: The 700 or so FÖRCH field staff in Germany processed more than 70,000 orders per month via the new sales app right at the start.

Thanks to the early introduction of the new web store and the sales app, the project team was able to concentrate 100 percent on technical and process-related problems and issues during the major ERP system change. To make it concrete: In the first few weeks, only an average of five support requests per day had to be processed by the field sales staff concerned.

04.

## THE ADVANTAGES OF THE POLUMANA® SALES APP

- the POLUMANA® sales app can be adapted to new needs and conditions at any time and supplemented with a service app
- even large amounts of data are no problem for the POLUMANA® App
- even with a slow internet connection, the POLUMANA® App has excellent system performance and is even fully offline-capable
- the POLUMANA® sales app is available in 18 languages and is already being used successfully by more than 16,000 named users.

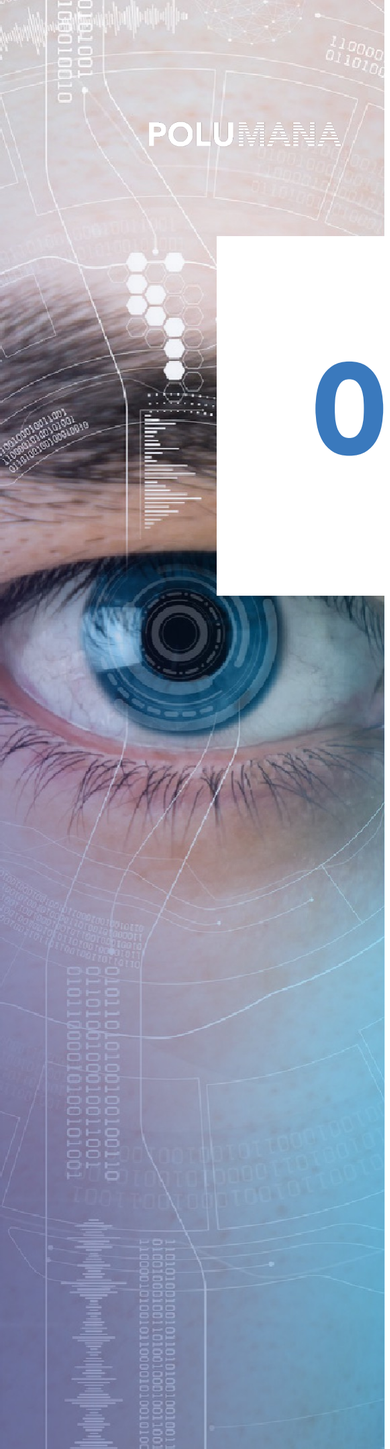
# 01.

# THE INITIAL SITUATION

The FÖRCH group of companies is a modern family business with locations in 55 countries and a good 60-year history. During this time, the company has grown continuously and now generates annual sales of more than half a billion euros. Among other things, this growth has also resulted from strong internationalization and the associated increasingly complex IT infrastructure. In combination with the increasing need for digitalization, this led to the decision at FÖRCH to see the growing challenges as an opportunity - one example: the step- by-step standardization of the ERP systems used in the various countries.

Another special feature of FÖRCH. In the area of sales, the company successfully relies on a multi-channel sales approach that combines the advantages of interpersonal relationships and digital solutions as optimally as possible. In practice, this means that the company's sales success is based primarily on three pillars - the direct customer relationships established by the approximately 2,000 field sales staff, the professional advice provided at the numerous sales locations, and the reliable performance of the company's own web store.

External influencing factors made the project a very special challenge: the global Corona pandemic, collapsing supply chains, and a war in Europe with skyrocketing freight and procurement prices.




# 02.

## THE PROJECT

In 2019, FÖRCH made the decision to replace its aging, self-developed ERP system with SAP S/4HANA, first in Germany and then successively the respective systems in other European national companies. "Unifying the system landscape is not only financially advantageous for us in the medium to long term, but also a prerequisite for future digital solutions with which we support our customers and employees and thanks to which we want to continue to grow as a company," says Steffen Federer, Head of IT and Digital Business at FÖRCH.

By future digital solutions, Federer means contemporary tools such as an efficient and customer-friendly web store and a modern and reliable sales app. For the latter, FÖRCH opted for a solution based on the POLUMANA® app from BLUE-ZONE. In combination with a modern ERP system and the renewed webshop, a future-proof digital infrastructure was to be created - and tools were to be used that would effectively support the FÖRCH sales team in its work with personal customer relationships, some of which had grown over decades.

In order not to overload the employees in the office and in the IT department and to give longstanding field sales employees the opportunity to get used to the new tools and processes by slowly trying them out, the new web store and the sales app were to be launched initially on the old ERP system as early as spring 2021 - just under a year before the launch of SAP S/4HANA at the beginning of 2022.

03.

# THE RESULTS

The go-live of the new SAP system - including the conversion of the web store and the POLUMANA® sales app to S/4HANA - succeeded without any major complications: The 700
or so FÖRCH field sales employees in Germany processed over 70,000 orders per month via the new sales app right from the start.

The early introduction of the new web store and sales app led to an almost insignificantly small number of support requests from the field staff concerned. In the first few weeks, only an average of five had to be processed per day.

Steffen Federer sums up: "For me, it's clear that BLUE-ZONE GmbH played a major role in ensuring that we were able to successfully implement the project in such a short period of time despite an ERP system rollout that was taking place in parallel and the incredibly complicated external conditions. Even months after the big go-live, I greatly appreciate the very agile and always solution-oriented approach of the BLUE-ZONE team."

# 04.

# THE HIGHLIGHTS

## + MAJOR PROJECT SMARTLY IMPLEMENTED

Thanks to the early launch of the web store and sales app in the old ERP system, the project team was able to focus 100 percent on technical and process-related problems and issues during the go-live of S/4HANA, since the web store and app only had to be converted and not additionally relaunched.

## + BLUEPRINT FOR THE OTHER COUNTRIES IS IN PLACE

After the successful go-live in Germany, the introduction in the other national companies is pending. Country specifics such as individual price calculations or commission calculations as well as other historically grown peculiarities have to be taken into account, but the foundation has already been laid.

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CONCRETE

# ADVANTAGES OF THE POLUMANA® APP

## + ADAPTABLE

The POLUMANA® sales app can, of course, be adapted to new needs and conditions at any time. With the POLUMANA® service app, BLUE-ZONE GmbH also offers a sister app for customer service and service teams.

## + RELIABLE AND HIGH-PERFORMANCE

Large amounts of data are no problem for the POLUMANA® App. Even the more than 100,000 products, such as at FÖRCH, which must always be kept up to date and - coordinated with the other sales channels and the warehouse locations - do not bring the app to its limits by a long shot.

## + FULLY OFFLINE-CAPABLE

Even with a slow interconnection, the POLUMANA® app has excellent system performance and is even fully offline-capable. Even for customer appointments in regions with poor or no mobile network and buildings, even large amounts of data are loaded quickly.

## + INTERNATIONALLY AND PROFITABLY APPLICABLE

The POLUMANA® sales app is available in 18 languages and is already being used successfully by more than 16,000 named users. At FÖRCH, the app now forms the basis for effective orchestration of customer management and successful cross- and upselling by the sales team.

POLUMANA

PEOPLE

"For me, it is clear that BLUE-ZONE GmbH played a major role in ensuring that we were able to successfully implement the project in such a short period of time despite a parallel ERP system implementation and the incredibly complicated external conditions. Even months after the big go-live, I greatly appreciate the very agile and always solution-oriented approach of the BLUE-ZONE team."

STEFFEN FEDERER // HEAD OF IT AND DIGITAL BUSINESS, FÖRCH

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