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Case study:
The Electronic Product Catalog CADENAS eCATALOGsolutions at AHP Merkle

CADENAS eCATALOGsolutions at AHP Merkle

CAD product catalog provides the best customer service at home and abroad

AHP Merkle, a manufacturer of hydraulic cylinders “sets things in motion” by providing first-class quality service to domestic and foreign customers. For example, AHP Merkle offers all information about its components in the customer’s respective language.

To provide customers with CAD download data of products around the clock, AHP Merkle introduced the Electronic Product Catalog in the year 2000, which is based on the eCATALOGsolutions technology of CADENAS. Due to the software manufacturer CADENAS, situated in Augsburg, the company from Gottenheim was able to create their own Electronic CAD Product Catalog and extend and maintain it by themselves. eCATALOGsolutions is an effective marketing instrument which promotes popularity of products and increases sales figures.

The family run company AHP Merkle has been developing, designing and manufacturing standard and custom made hydraulic cylinders of high-quality since 1973. The company’s head office is in Gottenheim near Freiburg and there are numerous agencies abroad - in Asia, North America and Europe.

AHP Merkle agencies worldwide



België	Hong Kong	Portuguesa
Česko	Ireland	Schweiz
China	Italia	Singapore
Danmark	Magyarország	Suomi
Deutschland	Nederland	Sverige
España	Norge	United Kingdom
France	Österreich	USA

CAD Product Catalog in 14 languages

The Electronic CAD Product Catalog, which was introduced in 2000, contains all 3D CAD models of AHP Merkle's standard products in 14 languages, including important international languages like English, German, French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese. Together with the 3D CAD download portal PARTcommunity, the catalog is directly integrated in the company's website and completely kept in the corporate design of AHP Merkle. Moreover all digital CAD product data of the manufacturer is enclosed in an offline CD to the print catalog ahp.book and distributed to customers and interested parties.



„AHP Merkle sets things in motion“ since January 2010 it is located in the completely redesigned company head office in Gottenheim near Freiburg



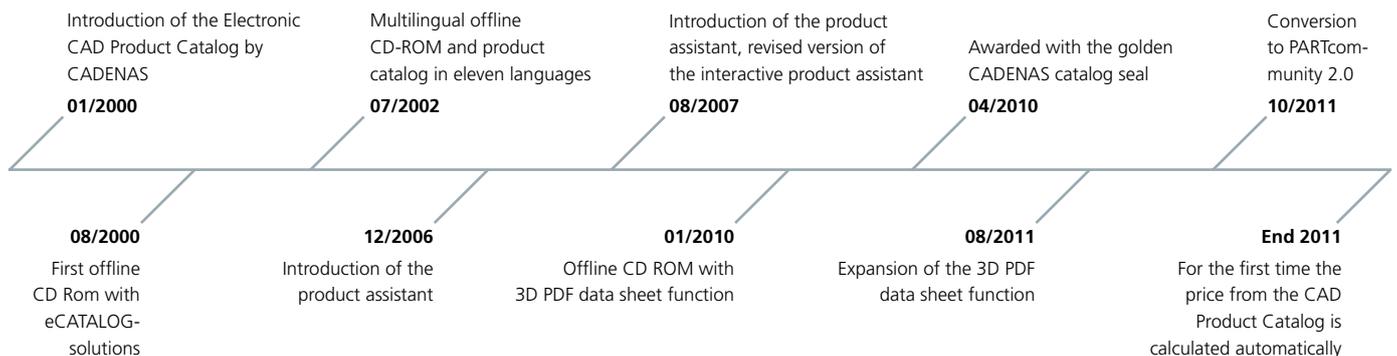
Christen Merkle
Managing Director of AHP Merkle

„For ten years we have been cooperating with CADENAS, achieving many successful developments like the CAD product catalog, the offline CD ROMs, the product assistant, the 3D PDF data sheet and the joint trade show appearances at the Euromold in 2010 and 2011. In the past years we have been able to inspire our customers with many exciting innovations.“



Jürgen Heimbach
CEO of CADENAS

„I am very impressed by the growth of AHP Merkle, the pursuit of continuous improvement and the professional product portfolio. This is unique in the hydraulic cylinder's sector and shows, that AHP Merkle is the market leader in this sector.“



Mile stones in the introduction of eCATALOGsolutions

Initial situation at AHP Merkle



Patrick Mußler
International sales at
AHP Merkle

Prior to the introduction of the Electronic Product Catalog, AHP Merkle only had a 2D catalog. “Back then it was already clear, that the future trend is 3D CAD data. Thus, we were looking for a 3D CAD catalog solution”, says Patrick Mußler, who is responsible for international sales and the creation of catalog information at AHP Merkle.

In the past CAD data was created by the engineering department at AHP Merkle, on every single customer request. This applied for the international agencies as well, who had to turn to the engineering department in Germany whenever orders were placed. Thus it took a lot of time and effort to process inquiries.

Since AHP Merkle offers very complex and diverse products, customers often used wrong or inconsistent product names, when placing an order. This resulted in a greater need for supporting services.



The solution had to meet the following requirements:

- The possibility to independently create, design and maintain the CAD catalog on the premises of AHP Merkle.
- The intuitive use of the catalog for the customer.
- The amount of interfaces to all common CAD systems should be as high as possible.
- The creation of an offline CD-ROM, where no prior installation is necessary.
- The product catalog should be multilingual.
- The possibility to integrate a product configurator.
- Providing CAD data in an online download portal.
- The seamless integration of the solution into the corporate design of AHP Merkle.

eCATALOGsolutions in the design of AHP Merkle

After an extensive selection procedure, AHP Merkle decided for CADENAS' extensive and scalable eCATALOGsolutions.

Today AHP Merkle offers a variety of different service options with 3D CAD data. In addition to the Electronic Product Catalog, it offers a CD-ROM, the product assistant and the 3D PDF data sheet with its reduction function.

"With the solutions of CADENAS we can create and design everything in our corporate design. It's nice when customers have the impression they are still at AHP Merkle, due to the continuous design, although they are already in an environment of CADENAS", says Christen Merkle. "Thus the elements of CADENAS perfectly fit into the overall concept of AHP Merkle."

CAD Product catalog and download portal



The CAD product catalog is presented in the design of AHP Merkle since October 2000 and contains 3D CAD models of all standard products in 14 languages. Moreover the online catalog has special options and functions that are not contained in the print catalog, such as additional languages, an assistant and the cylinder calculation function.



Frank Epple
Software development
manager at CADENAS

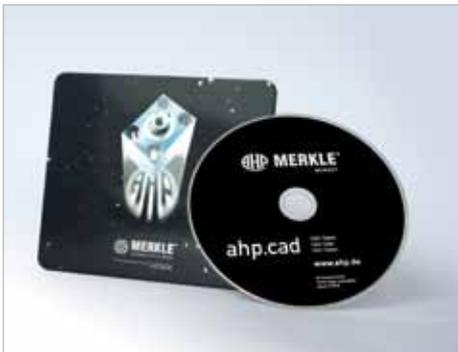
Creation and maintenance of the CAD product catalog by AHP Merkle

“AHP Merkle was able to create the Electronic CAD Product Catalog by itself, after a short training and only needed little support from CADENAS,” says Frank Epple, software development manager at CADENAS. This ensures that all current CAD data is at the customer’s disposal at any time of the day.

By using the 3D CAD download portal PARTcommunity 2.0, which is directly integrated into the company’s website, users can download CAD models of AHP Merkle in all current CAD formats and integrate them directly into their CAD system and design. This way, CAD data no longer has to be manufactured by the design department on specific customer request; instead they can be exported directly by the customer from the CAD product catalog with only a few clicks. This applies for foreign agencies as well, who can now create CAD data independently.

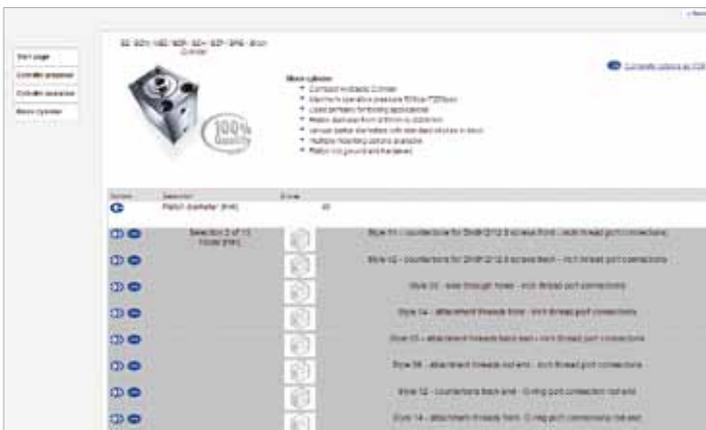
Awards for providing high-quality CAD data

In April 2010 AHP Merkle was awarded with CADENAS’ Golden Catalog Seal. This award proves that the AHP Merkle CAD product catalog meets the high requirements of CADENAS’ quality management.



CD-ROM with CAD data

The complete CAD data of AHP Merkle is also provided on offline CD-ROMs. These CD-ROMs are enclosed with each print catalog of AHP Merkle and the ideal complement. The contents of the CD-ROM can be compiled quickly and easily from the existing CAD data of the Electronic Product Catalog.



Product assistant

In December 2006 the product assistant was introduced at AHP Merkle. With this product assistant, customers and prospectives can quickly and easily compile hydraulic cylinders of the fitting specification, according to their individual needs. The product assistant uses the CAD data of AHP Merkle’s Electronic Product Catalog.

With the product assistant, each product name of a configuration is generated automatically and sent to AHP Merkle. “Since we have very complex and diverse products, we often received the wrong product names”, says Patrick Mußler. “With the product assistant we were able to reduce the number of necessary queries about orders significantly. The product names are now clear and accurate.”

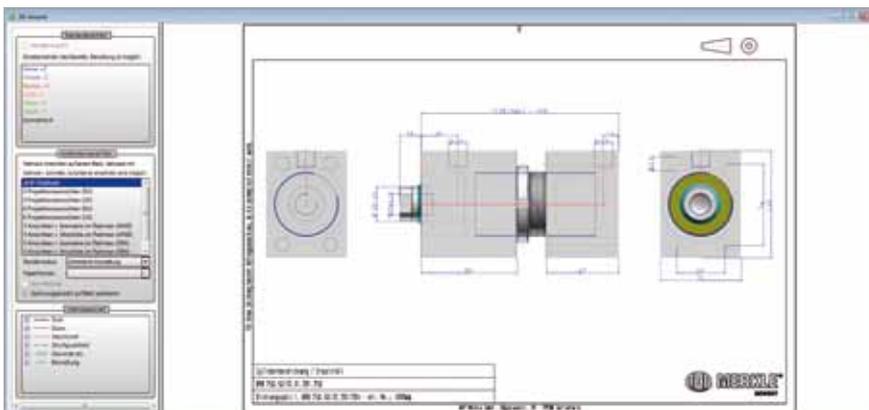
3D PDF data sheet with cylinder reduction function

„The automatic generation of 3D PDF data sheets from our Electronic CAD Product Catalog is an essential component of our customer service“, Mußler says convinced. “The function which was introduced in 2010 is a tremendous progress for process optimization at AHP Merkle.“ In the past data sheets at AHP Merkle were created manually with the help of 2D drafts and the measures were inserted manually as well. Afterwards print outs had to be scanned, so that information could be sent to the customer via email.

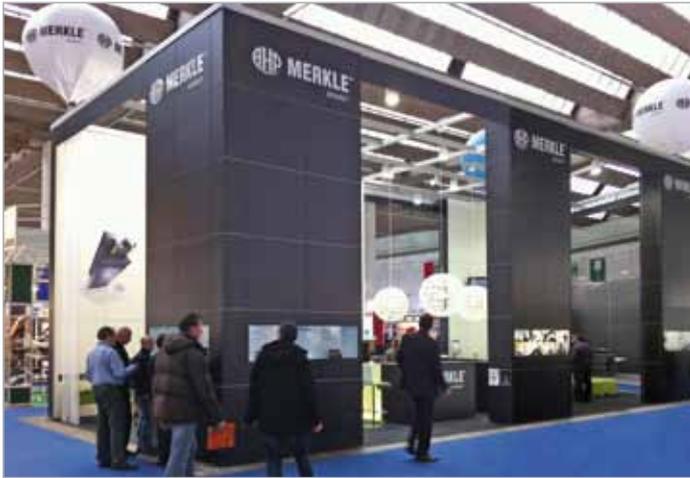


AHP Merkle 3D PDF data sheet

In the course of developing the first PDF data sheet for AHP Merkle, a reduction function for cylinders was developed especially for the company in Gottenheim. Reason: Some products would not fit on a DIN A-4 sheet, due to their overall geometry – the length of the cylinders was far bigger than the diameter. With CADENAS' new technology, the cylinders for the 3D PDF data sheet were reduced in the middle to a presentable size and additionally equipped with automatic dimensioning. It was planned that a new version of the 3D PDF data sheet with additional functions and improvements (integrated spare parts and parts lists, multilingualism and weight of the component) would be launched in 2011.



Reduction function for AHP Merkle cylinders



The redesigned trade show booth of AHP Merkle stands out from the crowd with a modern design and generosity

Joint trade show appearance at the Euromold

EUROMOLD

Since 2010, AHP Merkle and CADENAS present themselves jointly at a completely redesigned trade show booth of AHP Merkle at the Euromold. CADENAS was able to attract visitors with the innovative and interactive features of the tradeshow entertainment package, and get them excited about new products from the hydraulic cylinders manufacturer.

Christen Merkle is thrilled about it: "The trade-show cooperation was a total success. People liked the cooperation and we definitely will repeat that in 2011. CADENAS and AHP Merkle – together they are two strong brand names at one booth. That's great!"



Trade show visitors were able to plunge into virtual reality with the augmented reality flyers

CADENAS handed out product flyers with augmented reality markers and 3D glasses, so customers and prospects could have the most realistic experience of AHP Merkle's 3D CAD models. Displayed on big screens, the models were the perfect eye catcher.



Feedback and successes

The feedback of customers on the comprehensive CAD service of AHP Merkle is consistently positive. The fact that CAD product data is provided is the crucial criterion for many customers, to decide for the products of the manufacturer from Gottenheim.

The managing director of AHP Merkle is convinced, that "it totally paid off to make the access for customers to product information as simple as possible. CADENAS' software solution eCATALOGsolutions also supports us to speed up many internal processes and use our capabilities more effectively." For example, the ordering process was simplified and now the engineering department can concentrate on the important core task to develop products.

Perfect win-win situation

AHP Merkle proudly looks back on many innovations and mile stones that have come from their partnership with CADENAS.

"We are always looking forward to new results and possibilities and are proud to present them to our customers," says Patrick Mußler. "Since we have developed most of the innovations with CADENAS, we think that this has been a perfect win-win situation for both companies."

AHP Merkle is especially pleased about the fact that CADENAS always takes up the ideas and requests of AHP Merkle and implements them as quick as possible.

CAD data makes a decisive contribution to this impressive success

"We are totally thrilled by the impressive success of the past years, which we think is due to the coherent and innovative overall concept of AHP Merkle", Christen Merkle exclaims. „The comfortable provision of CAD data makes its decisive contribution."

„In the course of our very intensive cooperation with AHP Merkle, many important ideas and innovations were developed and put into practice, to improve the software solution eCATALOGsolutions. So I'm really looking forward to further projects with AHP Merkle", says Jürgen Heimbach.



Future projects

In order to help AHP Merkle continue to meet the needs of international markets, CADENAS has planned the implementation of new projects and mile stones for the near future.

Expanding and optimizing the 3D PDF data sheet function

With the release of the new data sheet function in 2011, a complete and automatic documentation of AHP Merkle products was created. Now the 3D PDF data sheet can immediately be delivered to the customer with the CAD geometry.

The international AHP sales offices benefit from this new function as well, since they can create 3D PDF data sheets themselves and pass them on to their customers in their local language.

Direct price calculation with the CAD product catalog

At the suggestion of AHP Merkle, in 2011 CADENAS started developing a completely new function to improve the internal processes for the hydraulic cylinders manufacturer in Gottenheim. Soon the sales department will be able to calculate prices directly based on the CAD product catalog.

This function is essential because of the great variety of products that AHP Merkle offers. Since each variation changes the price, pricing can become very complicated.

The aim of the new pricing function is that all international sales offices should be able to do price calculations themselves. This would result in a significant reduction of the effort needed for the ordering process.





About AHP Merkle GmbH

AHP Merkle stands for first-class quality of developing, designing and manufacturing high-class hydraulic cylinders. Since 1973 we have been serving renowned customers of the tool-, mould making and engineering industries.

The family-run business presently employs 130 people at its head office. Globally more than 15 agencies in Europe, North America and Asia ensure that customers of AHP Merkle receive comprehensive service on-site.

Due to the quality policy which is an integral part of the company, as well as flexibility and constant innovations, AHP Merkle will also set things in motion in the future, with the best products – a commitment guaranteed by our good name.

For further information, please visit: www.ahp.de

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About the CADENAS GmbH

CADENAS is a leading software developer in the areas of Strategic Parts Management and parts reduction (PARTsolutions), as well as Electronic Product Catalogs (eCATALOGsolutions). With its customized software solutions, the company acts as a link between the component manufacturers with their products and the purchasers.

With its 300 employees at 14 international subsidiaries, the name CADENAS (Hispanic: process chains) has been standing for success, creativity, support and process optimization for 19 years.

For further information please visit: www.cadenas.de/en

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