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Taking mobility international.

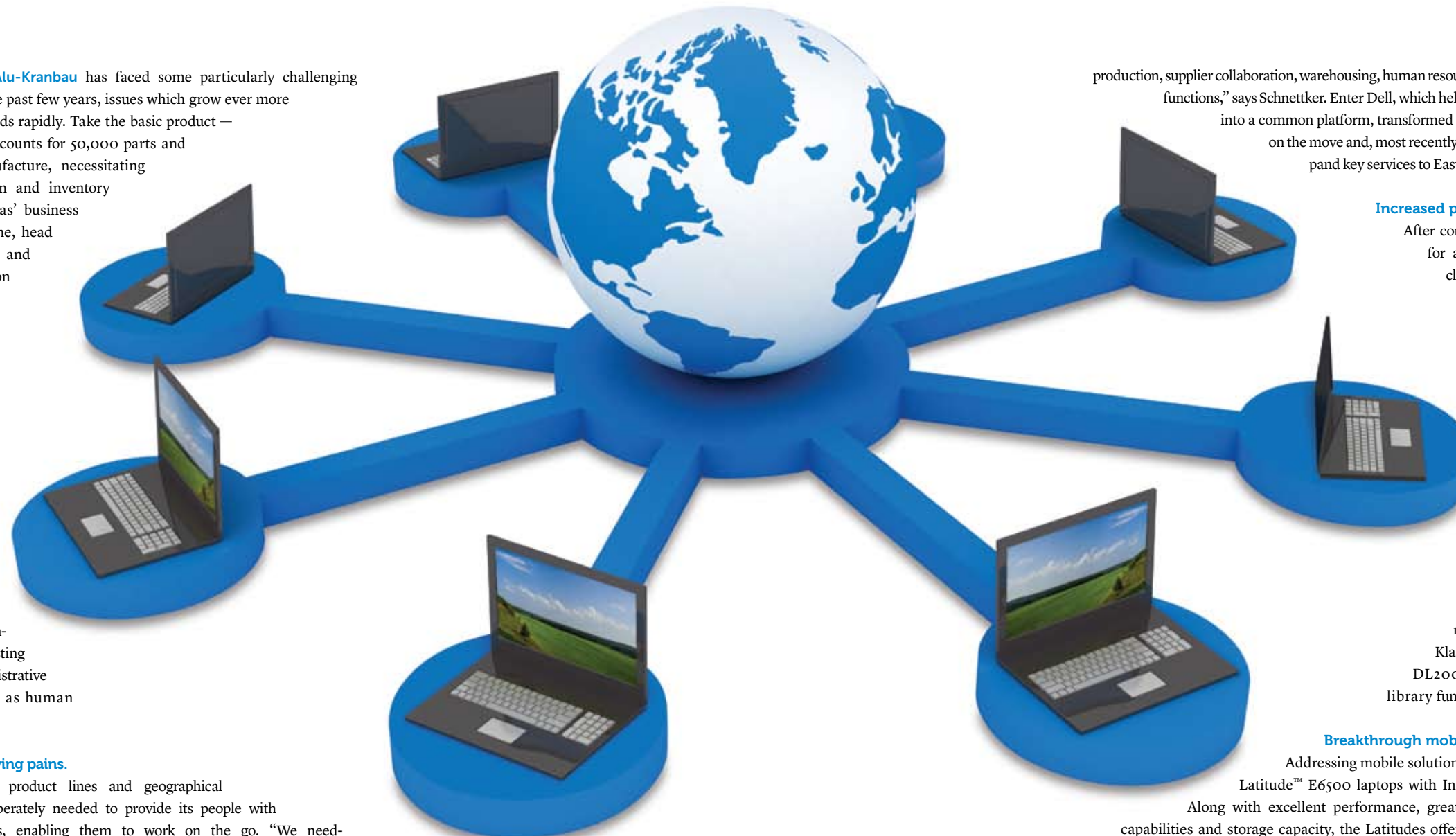
By Paul Kallender-Umezu

Crane manufacturer **Klaas Alu-Kranbau** has faced some particularly challenging industry-specific issues over the past few years, issues which grow ever more complex as the company expands rapidly. Take the basic product — a single crane, for example, accounts for 50,000 parts and takes several weeks to manufacture, necessitating carefully controlled production and inventory management. Since 2005, Klaas' business has grown 85 percent in volume, head count has more than doubled and inventory passed two million components as the company rolled out new products, says Jörg Schnettker, head of IT at Klaas.

By 2008, Klaas' ERP solution had run into a brick wall. Accessing key production or management information could take as long as 30 minutes. "The problem is that our products and our business had become much more complex," says Schnettker. It was also impossible to extend the existing infrastructure to improve administrative and financial functions such as human resources and payroll.

IT to deliver growth, not growing pains.

As Klaas expanded both its product lines and geographical sales points, the company desperately needed to provide its people with mobile virtual office functions, enabling them to work on the go. "We needed a fully supported infrastructure that could increase visibility of stock, automate production processes and give employees instant access to information — a single ERP environment to optimize



production, supplier collaboration, warehousing, human resources management, payroll and other key functions," says Schnettker. Enter Dell, which helped Klaas knit heterogeneous functions into a common platform, transformed its employees' ability to stay productive on the move and, most recently, allowed the company to seamlessly expand key services to Eastern Europe and Asia.

Increased productivity on the move.

After comparing several solutions, Klaas opted for a Dell package that delivered a first-class ERP in-frastructure with a mobile solution that has transformed the company's efficiency and flexibility.

PowerEdge™ 2900 servers with Intel® Xeon® Processors E5430, which are certified and optimized for supporting the Sage ERP environment and Oracle database, formed the core of the system. To help Klaas manage and protect its key data, Dell delivered a state-of-the-art solution built on a Dell PowerVault™ MD1000 direct attached storage array running Symantec Backup Exec software.

Klaas also deployed a Dell PowerVault DL2000 disk backup, which offers tape library functionality.

Breakthrough mobility.

Addressing mobile solutions, Dell provided six high-specification Latitude™ E6500 laptops with Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processors P8400.

Along with excellent performance, great battery life, sophisticated graphics capabilities and storage capacity, the Latitudes offered leading connectivity with built-in universal mobile telecommunications system (UMTS) cards.

The transformation of mobile productivity has produced several dramatic benefits. In narrow terms, worries

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about basics such as bottlenecks have been assuaged. “Our old ERP software suffered a huge overload on data at any start of the program. Dell’s ERP solution needs only 64k (ISDN) lines to start up,” says Schnettker. “And with the new connectivity, employees can complete key work on-site, saving time and energy,” he adds.

“We can answer customer queries faster, which improves service levels, increases our competitive advantage and enhances our corporate reputation,” says Schnettker. “Our service employees don’t have to search for the next plug — because they can use the notebooks the whole service time. Additionally, our developers are able to help our service employees by remote maintenance. So they can program our products at their workplace without leaving our headquarters.”

Dell’s solution has played a key role in enabling Klaas to successfully sell and service a brand-new product range in Eastern Europe and Asia. “For our new firefighter trucks, it is extremely important to be mobile,” says Schnettker. “Our field service has to repair the trucks in Asia and Eastern Europe and therefore mobility is a top priority. Now, thanks to Dell, it is possible to use our ERP around the world and estimate production time using the ERP on the notebooks.”

Transformational speed: Customer wait times halved.

The Dell/Sage deployment is paying off handsomely, enabling Klaas to increase production while halving customer wait times. “The Dell and Sage infrastructure has automated our key production processes,” says Schnettker. “Because people can see what they need to do and when they need to do it, we no longer waste time.”

As for the 30 minutes it used to take to access critical production and management information, that’s history, too. “The Dell infrastructure provides access to the management information we need in just 30 seconds, delivering massive time savings,” says Schnettker.

In addition, the Dell storage environment makes data backup and recovery significantly faster. “In the past, I had to look for the files across different tapes, which often took up to half an hour,” says Schnettker. “I can now find and recover the files I need in less than three minutes using an intuitive graphical interface.”

Another benefit is drastically improved recovery from data backup failures — a process that used to take two days now takes just four hours. Schnettker says a key question when choosing an ERP system was whether it would grow with Klaas. His answer is a resounding yes, with Dell providing trouble-free scalability. “The backup system just got two new hard disks and should get 10 new disks next year. The first two disks were installed in a few minutes; for the next 10 disks we have to install an additional PowerVault,” he says.

Support for constant business continuity and fast return on investment.

Dell’s ability to support its customers was a vital winning point for Klaas. When asked if there was one overall reason for Dell’s superiority, Schnettker replies, “If I could put it in a word, that word is service. We need our computers every day and therefore good service is a compelling reason for us. Additionally, we need rock-solid workstations for our CAD software (SolidWorks) and Dell is a certified partner of SolidWorks.”

With IT mission critical, Klaas decided to sign a five-year Dell ProSupport for IT agreement, ensuring that all service requests are dealt with quickly and providing Next Business Day On-Site Service. The Fast Track Dispatch option has made it easy for certified Klaas employees to diagnose service issues and order replacement Dell components online. Service issues are addressed swiftly, delivering the best possible experience for Klaas IT professionals and end users.

“We always get a positive outcome in less than 24 hours, which ensures constant continuity for key processes,” says Schnettker. By helping to increase employee productivity and mobility, as well as supporting a major expansion while improving efficiency, the Dell infrastructure has proved a bargain. “It’s extremely easy for us to justify our investment,” he adds. “The Dell environment has paid for itself in just 18 months.”

Tokyo-based writer and editor Paul Kallender-Umezu is the author of *In Defense of Japan: From the Market to the Military in Space Policy*.



How it works.

Services

- Dell ProSupport™ for IT
- Dell Online Self Dispatch
- Next Business Day On-Site Service after remote diagnosis*

Hardware

- Dell PowerEdge™ 2900 server with Intel® Xeon® Processors E5430
- Dell PowerVault™ MD1000 direct attached storage array
- Dell PowerVault DL2000 disk backup
- Dell Latitude™ E6500 laptops with Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processors P8400

Software

- Symantec® Backup Exec
- Sage® ERP package

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