

NEW DRIVE FOR PARTNERSHIP

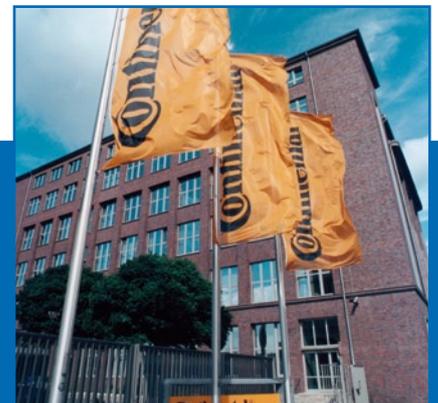
CONTINENTAL AUTOMOTIVE SYSTEMS AND ZF SACHS AG COOPERATE VIA SUPPLYON COLLABORATION FOLDERS

The hybrid drive, a combination of an electric motor and a combustion engine, is currently one of the biggest trends in the automotive industry. The challenging work of developing hybrid drives requires a wide-ranging set of technological abilities. Continental Automotive Systems and ZF Friedrichshafen AG, two of the world's biggest systems partners of the automotive industry, are working together to develop futuristic hybrid technologies and share their knowledge via SupplyOn's collaboration platform.

These joint projects aim to develop hybrid drive systems. ZF Sachs, a division of ZF that produces drive and chassis components, can bring to the table not only the transmission expertise of its parent company but also its own expertise in areas such as electrical machines, clutches, torque converters and drivelines for hybrid drives. Continental Automotive Systems on the other hand is responsible for the electronic systems, energy accumulators and regenerative braking systems. One key focus of these projects is to develop the software for the drive. The partners are working intensively on this aspect as their different areas of know-how complement one another perfectly.

to swap data, taking account of our stringent security standards, work on it jointly and save our results to a central location," adds Mathias Link, responsible for hybrid drive system design in the first joint venture project at Continental.

After a short evaluation phase, Continental Automotive Systems and ZF opted for the web-based collaboration solution from SupplyOn. SupplyOn Collaboration Folders offers project teams a secure virtual project space outside the limits of their own companies where they can manage all project



"The main priority for both companies was to get the project off the ground quickly. We needed an efficient solution to provide us with the best support for joint development work and we needed it fast," says Bernd Peinemann, project manager for the Electric drives department at ZF Sachs. "In order to share the development work we had to be able

documents centrally. Everyone involved in a project is assigned specific rights to allow them access to the relevant documents and folders. Documents can be saved, edited and swapped here. Integrated version management means that all changes made to project documents are obvious and easy to comprehend.

"We were mainly looking for a solution that we could get up and running quickly. All the alternatives, especially installing a separate collaboration server at one of our premises, proved to be more expensive and would have taken more time to implement if we had to consider the data security interests and server access options for the other partner," says Link.

The IT departments of both companies had been involved in planning the IT project from an early stage and both backed SupplyOn Collaboration Folders since it satisfied all the main requirements. As well as the option of storing, swapping and jointly using data from a central location, the platform also promised efficient version management of documents. "When you are working on a complex development project, you

need to be able to access older versions and fully understand the changes that have been made," comments Peinemann.

Rapid project implementation

The IT project was implemented very quickly in line with the clear specification. After the initial meetings held just before Christmas in 2005, implementation started in January 2006. During the first phase, the SupplyOn collaboration platform was set up and around 120 development staff from Continental Automotive Systems and ZF Sachs were defined as users. In parallel to this, the two companies worked on a structure for storing data. The next step was to train staff, allowing them to become familiar with the new solution in a pilot application. Finally, the data was entered into the jointly defined struc-

ture and the virtual project space was released for productive use in March 2006.

"We had to respond quickly to our customers' requirements and get on with development work so we did not invest in complex customizing. Our key requirements were fully satisfied by the standard solution," says Peinemann.

Prospects

The virtual project space is currently being used by both partners to store and process data. But Peinemann believes that other, even more complex projects could be handled by Collaboration Folders in the future: "I think you could use the forward-looking SupplyOn platform to incorporate more partners or for similar joint ventures with OEMs."

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