

RealObjects PDFreactor aids the digitalisation of administration

Supporting documentation requirements for German authorities and other procurement offices as part of public procurement with RealObjects PDFreactor

cosinex GmbH

As a pioneer in the field of electronic procurement (**e-procurement**), since 2000 cosinex GmbH has been providing the public sector with solutions to electronically support public procurement and tendering.

The cosinex **procurement management system** enables the procurement process to be handled electronically, from needs assessment and designing the tender procedure through to administering contracts concluded on the basis of electronic files. The cosinex **procurement marketplace** supports electronic transactions and communications between public-sector clients and providers as part of awarding public contracts.

Thanks to other solutions including a procurement catalogue, the German procurement portal DTVP and the e-invoicing portal xrechnung.io, cosinex provides the public sector with a wide range of support. In addition, it also operates in various areas of administration digitalisation via its subsidiaries and holdings as part of the GovTech Group.

The screenshot displays the cosinex procurement management system homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the VMS logo and several menu items: Startseite, Beschaffungsanträge, Vergabeakten, Verträge, Kriterienkataloge, Verwaltung, Berichte, and a user profile for M. Mustermann. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Allgemeines:** Shows the user profile for Herr Max Mustermann (Stadt Neustadt) and a list of recently opened procurement items (Zuletzt geöffnet) with details like ATNR numbers and descriptions.
- Termine/Fristen:** A calendar view showing deadlines for various procurement items, including preparation dates and submission deadlines.
- Aufgabenliste:** A task list with various status indicators and counts, such as 'Angebots- / Antragsöffnungen' (20) and 'Beschaffungsanträge in Prüfung / in Überarbeitung' (17).

The cosinex procurement management system homepage

The starting point

The cosinex procurement management system helps public-sector clients implement an entire procurement process. It can be integrated into a system landscape via standard interfaces and is tailored to the contracting authority's individual requirements when it is first installed.

Generating PDFs is a key requirement for such a system. Contracting authorities still want procurement documents in a stan-

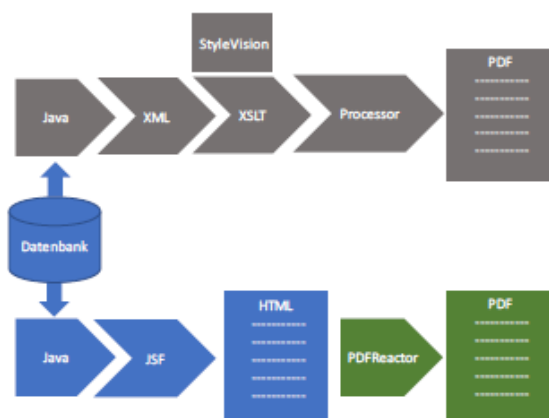
dardised form view, so they have to be generated in line with this. Printing tender files or individual documents also remains a feature.

In addition, one key application scenario is archiving within corresponding archive or document management systems. As these are file-based, the content inputted by users must be extracted from the system and outputted as a PDF, together with

any other information that needs to be added.

Before we switched to PDFreactor, these requirements were met via a workflow using the programming language XSL Transformations (XSLT).

As well as the need to continually maintain expertise in this and the solution's high level of complexity, it was primarily the redundancy of the workflows that prompted us to seek out a new solution.



This is because generating PDFs required the definition of XML-based rules and style parameters, which were also needed to generate the HTML within the solution itself.

We were therefore interested in a solution that would enable us to latch on directly to the HTML generated, in order to completely do away with the old workflow (shown in grey in the diagram above) and add a new green workflow to the existing blue workflow (the HTML generation).

Our requirements

We therefore came up with the following requirements for a suitable solution:

It had to be PDF/A-compliant to ensure that the key archiving function could be completed as effectively as possible. PDF/

UA compatibility was also important to us, in order to acknowledge the growing relevance of accessibility in public administration (and society) for the medium term.

Furthermore, we have specific licensing requirements, since as well as operating the procurement management system on a platform, we must also be able to pass the functionality on to our clients, who operate the procurement management system within their own varying system landscapes.

This was followed by a need for an easily integrated solution, which ideally should be operated as an additional Java library rather than a further piece of software alongside the in-house software, with all the associated problems (especially for on-premise installations).

Choosing RealObjects and PDFreactor

The market for solutions to meet these requirements quickly proved straightforward. Ultimately, only two specific providers made the cut for consideration. Our hugely important licensing requirements in particular prompted us to opt for PDFreactor by RealObjects, rather than its Australian competitor, in the spring of 2021.

Product deployment

The solution was implemented over the course of the 2021 calendar year.

The rules and style parameters for generating PDFs are now provided as separate CSS classes in the HTML. Since HTML generation is the base technology behind our product development, we no longer need specific expertise in areas such as XSLT.

And as no significant issues have arisen thus far in operating the solution, we have not yet had any major technical support requirements.

Carsten Eschenröder, Head of Product Management and Development:



'Choosing PDFreactor as software "Made in Germany" quickly proved to be a very good decision. A German-speaking technology partner with direct access to management – if required – and a professional team meant that we were able to implement the process of switching over to PDFreactor extremely quickly.'

From a technical perspective, it was primarily the native Java API and the out-of-box user experience that quickly ensured the desired successes for our product.

In our daily dealings with RealObjects as a long-term OEM partner, we value their generally very quick, sometimes even same-day response times, for example if we need a new licence key for a new product installation with a client.'

Conclusion

As developing the necessary functionality in-house was not an option given the scope and complexity, we were delighted to have found a professional software library for our operational purposes. Using RealObjects PDFreactor allowed us to eliminate redundancy in our application development workflows – creating considerable added value for cosinex GmbH.

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