

Media release



AI and Geopolitics Converge at Lake Constance: Exploring IT Megatrends at Digital Lounge@Lakeside 2024

Swiss Information Management Experts, Data Migration International, Draw Nearly 300 Attendees at Their 3rd International Conference

Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, August 23rd, 2024 - Under the motto "All about Data and Artificial Intelligence", the Data Migration International (DMI) Group held its third international customer and partner conference on Lake Constance. Approximately 300 guests from Switzerland and abroad accepted the invitation to Schloss Seeburg in Kreuzlingen and discussed the current megatrends in corporate IT. These included, in particular, the topic of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), which will not only fundamentally change the way data and information is handled, but also the way in which people interact with machines. The profound geopolitical changes and their potential impact on the planning, implementation and adaptation of the global IT landscapes of internationally operating companies were also intensively discussed at the conference.

Prof Dr Peter Buxmann, Chair of Information Systems at the Technical University of Darmstadt, set the right tone right at the start of the conference: "Generative artificial intelligence is a no-brainer for companies. The costs are calculable and the potential for increasing productivity is enormous. What's. This means that the question of economic viability does not arise. Companies cannot and should not hesitate but should experiment with generative AI as quickly as possible."

On the other hand, Prof Buxmann did not conceal the downsides of the new technology: it can present even the most absurd and dangerous content so convincingly that it appears to be true without any further fact or plausibility checks. On the other hand, the benefits of the technology must also be weighed against the considerable and growing ecological footprint that generative AI leaves behind. And finally, the answer to the question of how the problem of fake news can be solved has yet to be found. However, according to Professor Buxmann, these legitimate concerns should not stand in the way of pilot projects. The potential benefits are too great. The professor's tip: "Only use the paid versions of the GenAI offerings, do not use the company data for further training and only process it on servers in Europe."

The software industry must ensure a higher degree of automation

Thomas Failer, founder and Group CEO of the Data Migration International Group, took the same line in his keynote speech on data and AI, also holding his own industry to account: "Generative artificial intelligence in particular holds enormous potential for automation and therefore productivity for our customers. However, it is at least as important that the IT industry utilises AI to significantly increase the level of automation of IT projects for customers. Even very large modernisation and transformation projects should no longer take years but must be successfully completed within months. The pace of innovation and change in the areas of products, services and processes is simply too high."

A key prerequisite for this acceleration is the data fabric. This enables companies to access and analyse their entire wealth of information and knowledge, regardless of the underlying data structure and database technology. The core of such a data fabric is the DMI platform for information management JiVS IMP. A platform for company-wide information management is essential because applications and data each have their own life cycle. For regulatory or business reasons, data often has a longer lifespan than the applications in which it was generated. It is therefore important and possible with JiVS IMP to decouple the data level from the application level and thus manage the different lifecycles separately. With the help of JiVS IMP, companies can reduce the costs of operating their legacy systems by 80 per cent, halve the migration effort to new software generations and ensure 100 per cent access to information and legal security.

One of these transformation projects that is currently affecting many companies worldwide is the switch to the latest software generation from Walldorf: SAP S/4HANA. Thomas Failer estimates that around three quarters of SAP customers worldwide still have the migration ahead of them. Given the limited SAP consulting resources on the market, this can only be achieved by 2030, the official end of support for the previous generation of SAP software, if project durations are significantly shortened, especially in the area of enterprise data.

"That is the purpose of all our development initiatives in AI. Whether it's identifying personal data in the hundreds of thousands of SAP tables or documents and images or creating new business models - everything must be intuitive to use and work at the touch of a button," emphasizes Thomas Failer. "That's why not only the degree of automation is crucial when it comes to AI, but also the ease of use of the user interfaces. As in the consumer market, the trend in business IT is also moving towards self-service."

According to Thomas Failer, in order to achieve these goals, the topic of AI must not only be anchored in the technology and products, but also in the entire company organisation and the way employees work together. He advises: "We have found that regular workshops in a completely different and physically and mentally stimulating environment, in our case in Davos, are the method of choice. In times of home office and remote working, colleagues meet here outside of their daily routine and the usual structures. The potential for creativity that is unleashed here is enormous. In these workshops, we achieve results on highly complex and interdisciplinary topics that used to take us up to six months in some cases."

Man, and machine: from cave drawings to electricity

Speaking of working methods: According to Alexander Finger, Chief Technology Officer, SAP Switzerland, generative AI will revolutionise the way people interact with machines. Thanks to the production maturity and availability of generative AI, high-resolution data and augmented reality, we are at a point of convergence. While today we still operate a touchscreen with our fingers like our ancestors in the cave, in the future we could converse in natural language with a seemingly living version of SAP. Using generative AI, data and systems such as ERP would learn to speak and draw.

In his opinion, however, this is only the beginning and is similar to the invention and introduction of the steam engine, which revolutionized production and transport. What is not yet foreseeable, however, is the equivalent of electricity generation, which was also a consequence of the invention of the steam engine. He emphasized: "Whatever this equivalent will be, it will come". SAP has taken the first steps by introducing the AI-based chatbot Joule and the HANA Vector Engine, which prepares company data from the SAP HANA database for use by generative AI solutions.

Cost-effectiveness of AI is crucial for customers

And what about the customers? In the panel discussions, they agreed on the potential of generative AI, but emphasised two things: AI is not a saviour - like no other technology. Instead, every company must identify the potential benefits of such projects and realise them in a way that makes business sense. At the same time, it is important to raise awareness of the fact that there may be conflicts of interest with other projects and initiatives, e.g. between sustainability and AI, and that the topic must not be at the expense of ongoing transformation projects such as the switch to SAP S/4HANA. All technology projects must be based on profitability calculations, as they allow them to be prioritised in a way that makes business sense. Her advice to software providers: Communication should not only focus on the technical benefits, but also and above all on the business benefits of new technologies and offerings.

"The greatest benefit of artificial intelligence, especially generative AI and large-language models or LLMs for short, lies in the productivity gains that can be achieved in a corporate context," explains Thomas Failer. "This potential is the source of the economic viability of artificial intelligence. We have been working on the integration of machine learning algorithms for some time now with our own AI development team. The first offerings with generative AI and LLMs as part of our JiVS-IMP platform should follow by 2025 at the latest. This will accelerate transformation projects, even those with the largest amounts of data, by a factor of two or more. This will make IT just as agile as today's corporate strategies. The investments will pay off in no time at all."

Geopolitics challenges corporate IT

Companies think less in terms of technologies and more in terms of application scenarios and benefit categories. At the same time, they always have their risks in mind, which can be a source of conflicting goals in IT, among other things. While globally harmonised and standardised IT represents a massive advantage not only for ongoing operations and costs, but also for transformation projects such as switching to a new generation of software, it also harbours a risk against the backdrop of current geopolitical challenges

and changes. What if data and systems in a particular country have to be removed from this IT in a very short space of time? The companies on the podium and the audience agreed that it is important to prepare for this situation immediately, at least conceptually in terms of a contingency plan that can be activated and implemented immediately if the worst comes to the worst.

Thomas Failer comments: "The geopolitical changes are putting the question of where data is processed and stored, and how it can be quickly extracted from systems and applications and relocated, back at the top of the agenda. We heard the concerns of CIOs at the conference and are focussing our development activities accordingly to further simplify and accelerate the management of information and data on a global scale based on our platform."

Image material

Images from the event are available for download [here](#).

Further information

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Data Migration International

We are a leading expert in data management, application decommissioning/archiving, and data migration. Based in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, we work with local and global SAP customers to solve business and technical data challenges. With over 27 years of experience, our team develops cutting-edge solutions to streamline digital transformation. Our flagship product, the JiVS Information Management Platform, independently manages the entire information lifecycle. JiVS covers scenarios such as application retirement, M&A, rightsizing/archiving, data migration to SAP S/4HANA (from SAP and non-SAP applications), retention management, and data quality improvement. JiVS IMP reduces operational costs by 80%, system migration efforts by 50%, and ensures 100% compliance and information accessibility. Trusted by customers such as ABB, Alstom, AXA, Mercedes Benz, HP, Campbell's, Novartis, Transfer Energy, Holcim, Marathon Petroleum, and many others.

Further information about the company and its solutions can be found at www.jivs.com.