

easy

ECE



REFERENCE STORY

**securing long-term success:
ECE moves to the cloud with
easy archive**





content

about ECE

ECE Group GmbH & Co KG is a Hamburg-based real estate company that was founded in 1965 by mail order pioneer Werner Otto and is still family-owned today. Under the leadership of Alexander Otto, the son of the founder, ECE has risen to become one of the leading European companies in the field of real estate development and management. Originally known for the development and operation of shopping centers (ECE Marketplaces), ECE has diversified its portfolio. Today, it is also active in the office, hotel, residential and logistics sectors (ECE Work & Live, ECE Living) and offers comprehensive real estate services and fund management. ECE currently has around 3100 employees and is active in 12 countries.

Shopping centers are the urban marketplaces of the 21st century. They create an experience that combines shopping with dining, entertainment and social meet-ups. The ECE Group represents this trend more than any other company in Germany. After all, the Hamburg-based family business of mail order pioneer Werner Otto brought this new way of shopping to Germany. Today, ECE not only operates over 100 shopping centers throughout Germany, the group is also active in many other fields of the real estate sector – from financing and operation to development and implementation.

the path to the cloud is a strategic decision

The company cites its values of independence, autonomy and sustainable thinking as the basis for this long-standing success story, which continues under the current CEO Alexander Otto. These guiding principles can also be seen in ECE's IT strategy:

"Our corporate strategy in IT has been geared towards expanding all of our systems into the cloud,"

explains Fabian Kramer, Product Owner in IT in Group Service and responsible for enterprise document processing at ECE. For ECE, the main reasons for moving to the cloud are the better future viability and outstanding scalability this technology provides.

In recent years, ECE's IT department has already begun to move the first core elements of its IT infrastructure, such as the SAP ERP system, to the cloud. The archiving of important documents in the company has now followed this path as well. ECE has been using easy archive for archiving for a long time – but it started out as an on-premises system on the company's own servers. As Product Owner, Fabian Kramer now had the task of bringing the archive into the cloud.



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a perfect match: easy archive and the cloud

It was clear very early on that the new archive solution in the cloud should still involve easy. For one thing, archiving with easy archive has been running smoothly on ECE's company servers for years. For another, easy archive met all the requirements for migration to the cloud. This is thanks to the flexible options provided by easy archive, which can be integrated into the IT infrastructure both on-premises and as a hybrid or cloud system with easy-to-integrate standard connectors and APIs. As a certified SAP partner, easy's solutions can also be seamlessly integrated into existing SAP systems.

many new use cases for the archive

At this point, it is interesting to note how ECE uses electronic archiving for its company documents: ECE started out using easy archive mainly for audit-proof and GDPR-compliant invoice storage. But more and more applications were added over time. In addition to invoices, ECE now also archives such things as contracts and related documents from the various business areas, as well as documents and correspondence that arise in the course of exchanges with tenants of ECE properties.

It often happens that individual documents cannot initially be classified in the archive:

"But we can now also process these documents efficiently. In easy archive, we have the option of automatically reclassifying them or, if the specific departments want to store them in a new category, we can also post-process each document and store it under a new class, making it easier to find."

with two archives into the cloud

When setting up the electronic archive with easy, the best solution for ECE turned out to be working with two separate archives. All documents classified as especially business-relevant are stored directly from SAP in easy archive for SAP. Specifically, these include invoices, contracts and sales certificates, among other things. In this use case, the archive runs in the background of SAP and ensures that all documents remain within the SAP database logic. These documents are accessed internally via the SAP software.

All other documents at ECE are archived directly in the easy software. These are accessed in the browser by way of the easy client. The reason why these documents are not stored in SAP, Fabian Kramer explains, is that **“access to the documents is easier and more familiar for us in this case than in the complex SAP system.”** This way, ECE ensures that even documents that do not directly contribute to value creation are still archived in an audit-proof and data protection-compliant manner and are very easy for users in the company to handle.

data volumes like these can only be managed electronically

The importance of electronic archiving for a company like ECE becomes clear when we consider the volume of documents stored in the two archives: According to Fabian Kramer, almost 10 million data records, i.e. archived documents, were moved from the on-premises environment to the cloud during the migration of the archives.



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requirements and standards for archiving business documents

- ✔ Improve efficiency
- ✔ Minimize risks
- ✔ Meet legal requirements



how data moves from on-premises to the cloud

How time-consuming is it to convert such an extensive archive system from on-premises to a cloud architecture? The entire project to migrate the data took about a year:

“We first had to go through a few rounds to evaluate and decide exactly how this transformation should proceed in each individual step. The actual project with the migration of the data and the transformation and coordination of all processes ultimately took just under six months.”

The biggest challenge for the product owner was to complete the migration during ongoing operations with as little impact as possible:

“Of course, we wanted to minimize any disruption to business operations, but we also had to transfer the business data in parallel to these operations so that we could make the switch at some point.”



In addition to the precise preparation of this step, Fabian Kramer also emphasizes how smooth the cooperation with easy was:

“Our colleagues at easy went to great lengths to create the right bridge so that the data could be transported directly from A to B.”

A positive side effect of the migration was that Fabian Kramer and his team removed some out-dated data records from the archive during the process.



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what makes a migration project successful

The migration to the cloud did not result in any noticeable changes for the company's day-to-day users. And that, adds Fabian Kramer with a laugh, is probably the greatest praise IT can receive in a project like this:

"The greatest success is when nobody notices that anything has changed."

However, this does not apply to the IT department itself. By switching to the cloud version of easy archive, ECE now receives its two archives as managed services, so it does not have to use its own resources for the ongoing operation of the software.

However, work on the electronic archive at ECE is not yet complete:

"We are currently discussing a possible link between the two archives with our easy colleagues."

Fabian Kramer also sees the expansion of AI-based features as a possible use case for a future project, for example to better analyze the archived data. And that also corresponds to one of ECE's key business principles: A company should never stand still; it should always continue to look for the best solutions.



„the actual project with the migration of the data and the transformation and coordination of all processes took just under six months.”



Fabian Kramer
Product Owner EDP
ECE

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