Where the Digital Twin begins

SAP Engineering Control Center — Central PLM Component at SAP

For the integration and management of mechatronic data throughout the product lifecycle, SAP uses SAP Engineering Control Center (SAP ECTR) – the standard integration platform. This solution, developed together with the SAP partner DSC Software AG, creates the data basis for all follow-on processes up to the Internet of Things (IoT) and the Digital Twin. Thomas Ohnemus, Vice President of Marketing, IoT and Digital Supply Chain at SAP, and Achim Rossel, Senior Vice President of Business Development at DSC Software AG, provide insight into the role of SAP ECTR in the overall SAP PLM context as well as into the further development of the solution.

Mr. Ohnemus, SAP ECTR has now been on the SAP price list for four years and has superseded the CAD Desktop, an SAP user interface for integrating mechanical CAD systems. In retrospect, was it the right decision to introduce SAP ECTR as the new solution?

Thomas Ohnemus: The introduction was certainly the right decision and has led to a greater recognition of SAP as a PLM provider. What's more, SAP ECTR is an important component of our digitization strategy. Thanks to the close integration of leading MCAD and ECAD authoring systems and company-wide data management using controlled change and release processes, consistent master data is created – the basis of all further processes, also with regard to the Internet of Things (IoT) and the Digital Twin. Another crucial argument for putting SAP ECTR on the SAP price list at the time was the fact that the product was already being used successfully by customers.

Basically, SAP ECTR is a further development of the DSC product Engineering Control Center – ECTR – which was already being used successfully worldwide more than ten years before SAP ECTR was launched.

Mr. Rossel, the roots of DSC Software AG are in NX SAP integration. How did it come to the development of the Engineering Control Center?

Achim Rossel: We always maintain close contact with our customers so that we can find out what their requirements of a PLM system are and to what extent these requirements can be met with SAP PLM. An important subject in the past – apart from the close integration of authoring systems – was the desire for a clearly structured user interface tailored specially to the needs of engineers. And that's precisely what we have implemented with ECTR, and all the satisfied customers as well as the positive feedback of interested

parties who carry out a benchmark speak for themselves. There is always particular praise for the intuitive operation, which simultaneously supports the typical core processes in development. This makes for a considerable increase in efficiency every day and thus saves time and money. ECTR and SAP ECTR are currently in use by more than 500 customers worldwide – with a special focus on the discrete industry.

Thomas Ohnemus: With the use of SAP ECTR, all mechanical, electrical and electronic product data as well as software components can be managed from a central user interface – indispensable for inter-disciplinary collaboration. Moreover, the data can be linked with objects from procurement, sales, or maintenance, which considerably improves transparency in the procedures. So users have a 360-degree view of the product – and that with an optically attractive user interface.

How will SAP ECTR develop further, and what do you attach particular importance to in further development?

Thomas Ohnemus: We think it's particularly importance to respect our customers' wishes for further development. After all, they can judge best how efficient a solution is in daily use – and perhaps what's missing. For this reason, SAP is organizing a so-called Customer Influence Program, in which SAP ECTR is also represented with an independent campaign. The first cycle of this program ran from September 2017 to March 2018; that means that in this period, customers were able to submit suggestions for improving the product. Subsequently, the customers were able to vote on what suggestions are finally to be implemented.
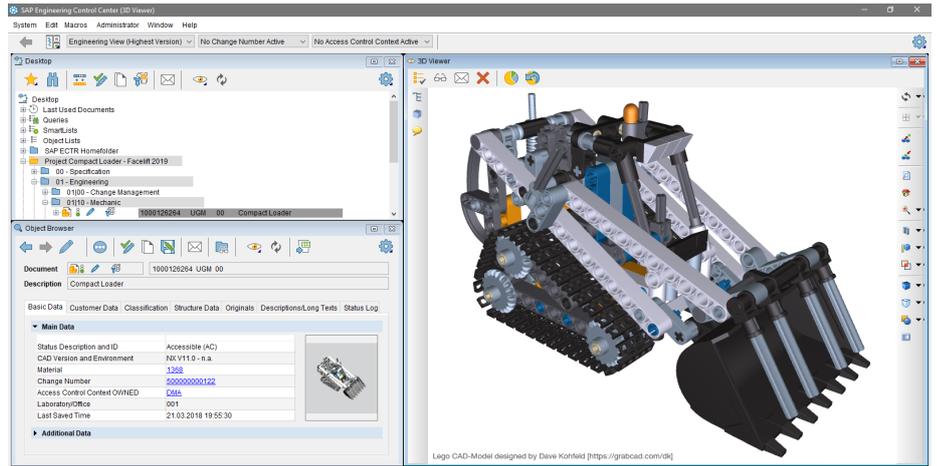

Thomas Ohnemus, Vice President Marketing, IoT and Digital Supply Chain at SAP (left) and Achim Rossel, Senoir Vice President Business Develpoment at DSC Software AG (right)

The next cycle of the program begins in the last quarter of 2018.

Achim Rossel: Lots of interesting improvement suggestions have come in. 41 have been or are being implemented by us. Not least by the close development partnership has the relationship between DSC and SAP incredibly intensified. We are in daily dialog and coordinate very closely with each other. But this joint view also includes the other CAD partners of SAP.

What additional solutions does DSC have to offer apart from SAP ECTR?

Achim Rossel: In addition to SAP ECTR and the already mentioned NX integration, we have developed additional features that are not part of the standard scope of SAP ECTR. Some, for example, simplify the handling of large assemblies and improve performance, particularly in weak networks. Our product Factory Control Center — FCTR — creates the

With SAP ECTR, all project participants have a constant, up-to-date view of the product – thanks to an intuitive cockpit. The embedded SAP 3D Visual Enterprise Viewer visualizes 2D/3D documents, even without a CAD system.

bridge between development and production. With FCTR, not just all CAD/CAM data for production procedures but also all tools can be managed in SAP. What's more, we offer the complete control of tools and resources in

production to ensure that orders can be started without waiting.

Gentlemen, many thanks for this conversation.