Interview

Munich Airport

Matthias Graf from Flughafen München GmbH (FMG) provides insights into the use of Clarity and Meisterplan as well as the integration of relevant third-party systems.

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About the Interviewer

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Matthias Graf

Chief Project Portfolio & Resource Management, Flughafen München GmbH

> **Hello Mr. Graf! Please introduce yourself briefly and tell us a few words about yourself.**

My name is Matthias Graf and I have been with Flughafen München GmbH since 1998. I have worked in the IT department since 2008. At the beginning, my job was called "Project Service," but nowadays we refer to it as PMO.

At that time (2008), Clarity had been newly introduced with itdesign as an implementation partner. Since then, I have been taking care of all things related to Clarity as well as classic PMO issues, such as the methodological foundation of single-project management, resource management, and project portfolio management.

> **Solutions used:** Clarity, Meisterplan

> **Use Cases:** Project, portfolio and resource management

> **In use since:** 2006

> **Interfaces:** MS SharePoint, SAP PS, SAP CATS, SAP HR, SAP CO, X-Time, Cherwell, Meisterplan

> **Deployment:** Group-wide, focus on IT department

Use of Clarity at FMG

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> **How is Clarity used at your company?**

Clarity is used throughout the Group, though primarily in IT. We use Clarity mainly for single-project management, that is, the individual project manager plans their project in Clarity – on tasks with resources, including ETC.

For IT resource management, we additionally use Meisterplan: Every two weeks, we hold our IT resource board meeting with Meisterplan to simulate the monthly allocation of employee roles to projects and their workload. One level above that is portfolio management, which we also partly do in Meisterplan.

Introduction of Functioning Resource Planning

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> **You recently introduced a resource management method. What were the reasons for this?**

Between 2017 and 2019, we underwent a major reorganization in IT. In the process, IT was fundamentally reorganized, and we organized ourselves more in terms of roles. This was also the kick-off for a new resource management project. After several attempts, we succeeded this time in introducing functioning resource management for IT. Today, we are pioneers in this area at FMG.

For tactical resource planning at the role level, we use Meisterplan, with Clarity providing the data basis. We have used this to also introduce the topic of portfolio management in IT.

Why this approach, you may ask? Our main problem is our limited resource capacity in terms of employees. That's why our focus was on resources and not on the financial issue, which is what people normally look at in the context of portfolios.

> **Why did it work out this time with the implementation?**

As everyone knows: Resource management is the supreme discipline in this PPM context. Our first attempt was aborted early on because we realized that the quality of our planning for projects was not yet sufficient. During subsequent attempts, we went into too much detail and made the approach too complicated.

The key to why we were able to make it work out this time is that we tried to keep everything as simple as possible and did not map every complex process, procedure, and workflow from the outset. For example, we only concentrated on the role level and on a monthly basis – it's not a disposition.

Connection of Third-Party Systems to Clarity via Interfaces

> **What interfaces do you use at FMG?**

In process terms, we have interfaces to MS SharePoint (documentation), SAP PS (structures), SAP CATS (time recording), SAP HR (organizations, departments, resources), SAP CO (finances), X-Time (time system), Cherwell (ticketing, demand management), and Meisterplan (portfolio and resource management). Technically speaking, of course, there are even more interfaces, because many are bidirectional, for example. But the topic of interfaces is constantly evolving: The organization is growing, and you have to keep up with that in other places as well.

> **Why are interfaces so important in your company?**

Let's start by saying that we are an airport, and an airport is, so to speak, a large general store with many different projects. A truck is digging up a field to lay fiber optic cables to connect outdoor transmitters for German air traffic control. That is an example of an IT project. Of course, we also have what you think of as more conventional IT projects, such as implementing ERP systems, to name just one example.

The topics at FMG are therefore wide-ranging and encompass a very large IT system landscape. Consequently, the information is distributed across many systems, which is also what gives rise to the need for interfaces.

> **What is the approach used to develop these interfaces together with itdesign?**

When developing an interface, we tend to be agile to a certain extent. First, we conceptualize in rough terms internally what we want. The joint implementation process with itdesign is then very iterative, and that works well. This way, we make sure that we only implement what we really need – no more and no less.

Often, certain special cases that have not yet been specified and still need to be addressed can be seen only in the operation of the interface – this step cannot be avoided at all. With the iterative approach, we simply add parts bit by bit that we find out we need along the way. In addition, we achieve the desired benefit more quickly, such as, for example, the anticipated reduction in workload.

> **How does the bidirectional interface between Clarity and Meisterplan work? How do you evaluate the interaction?**

The bidirectional interface works as follows: We take the data from Clarity, import it into Meisterplan and simulate the planning there. Decisions about resource allocations are made in the IT resource board and the data is then returned to Clarity (to the hard allocations of the teams). There they are redirected back into the projects. This backchannel work alone used to take an hour of our time, roughly – today, it takes less than ten minutes. At the next resource board meeting, the data will be transferred freshly from Clarity to Meisterplan.

Meisterplan as a Tool for Tactical Resource Planning

> **What challenges prompted you to introduce Meisterplan, and why did you choose this tool?**

Before Meisterplan was introduced, our resource management was a game of Excel bingo: time-consuming, cumbersome, and error-prone.

We first looked at what resource management tools were available on the market and what would best fit our needs. The choice was made relatively quickly, and so we went with Meisterplan. The bottom line is this: Meisterplan focuses on the weak point of the major all-rounder: in simulation. The amazing thing about Meisterplan is that itdesign fills this niche perfectly.
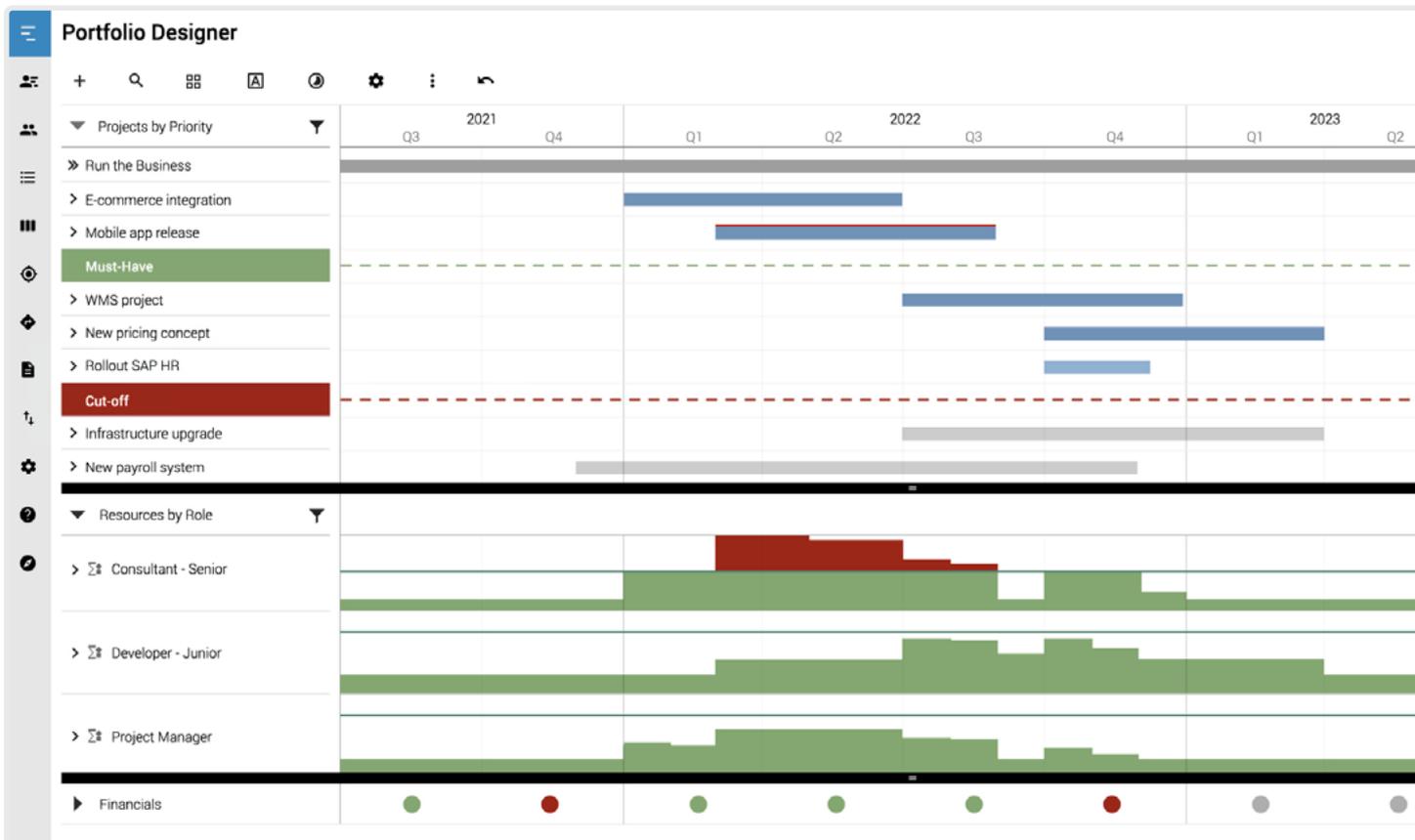
In your communication, itdesign also clearly conveys that the point is not to make perfectly accurate plans, but to plan estimated values in order to make rough statements. That's why Meisterplan fits our approach very well.

Besides, Meisterplan simply looks good, and we humans tend to be visually swayed – that's also one of the success factors. And the tool works and is easy to use.

> **How do you use Meisterplan in your company today?**

We have a nice success story about our path to implementing Meisterplan: When we first brought up the topic of resource management and transferred our data to Meisterplan for the first time, we were able to show that our planned needs did not fit our capacity at all. We were totally torn: We couldn't handle the projects. We only got the necessary additional capacity approved after we were able to use Meisterplan to show that we would have to cut a huge number of projects given the current resource situation.

We use Meisterplan like this: Every two weeks, we conduct an IT resource board meeting. All of the executives who contribute resources to projects meet, which is about 15 to 20 people. We talk about changes in projects, project launches, and new project proposals to be included in the portfolio. Meisterplan is the tool used for this, and we project it onto the wall (or share it via the screen at a web meeting). The tool provides us with a live view of the current project situation. We then make our decisions, that is, resource allocations, based on this. This is how we use Meisterplan at FMG: every two weeks, live directly in the tool, with the whole team.

Many Years of Successful Collaboration with itdesign

> **What is the background of your long-standing partnership with itdesign?**

I can't tell you in detail how it came about back then, because I wasn't on board at the time. But I do remember that we found itdesign through a recommendation. itdesign has developed tremendously over the last 12 years: Today, no one can come close to what your team is doing. I know implementations that were done with other partners, but itdesign does a really great job.

What I particularly appreciate about the partnership is the way we work together. Your approachable and technically skilled Management convinces through impressive know-how and partnership. When the Senior Management talks to each other, some topics are simply able to be conveyed differently. That has helped us at that level from time to time.

Last but not least, with my main contact Ralf, I have someone on hand with whom I can connect on a human level. I often sit down with Ralf, and we find a solution very quickly, just like in "pair programming". Thanks to the intensive collaboration, I am now in a position to assess implementation and realization topics in a completely different way.

> **We are pleased and would return the compliment. Many thanks for the kind words and the sympathetic interview!**

Flughafen München GmbH

> Founded: 1949

> Location: Munich, Germany

> Employees: 8.770

> Industry: Logistics, transport und traffic

Flughafen München GmbH (FMG), founded in 1949, operates Munich Airport along with its subsidiaries. Since its opening in 1992, Munich Airport has been one of the most important passenger terminals in Europe (number 2 in Germany) and an important international air traffic hub. As a "full-service operator", it provides services in every area of airport management.

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