A Strategy for Innovative Production at the **Bilstein Group**

Consulting

Independent and structured

Strategy

With clear goals for integrating AI

Building knowledge

Regarding the topic of AI

Customer

Bilstein Group

Industry

Manufacturing

SoftwareOne Services

Intelligence Fabric (AI Consulting)

In an industry where precision and efficiency determine market success, Bilstein faced the challenge of modernizing its complex production and planning processes. Its existing software was outdated. It had not been maintained, and it no longer provided accurate forecasts.

To solve the problem, the Bilstein Group engaged the independent consulting expertise of SoftwareOne. Through the 'Intelligence Fabric' strategy – a holistic consulting approach that enables a future-proof, AI-supported roadmap – it quickly became clear that the success of AI projects does not begin with technology, but with sound strategic planning.

The Challenge

Preparing for Artificial Intelligence

The Bilstein Group faced a series of complex challenges that made reliable production planning difficult. Its software failed to provide accurate forecasts because it could not reflect real operating conditions such as machine failures, maintenance, or short-term staff shortages. In addition to unreliable production forecasts, rising customer expectations for transparent product availability statements drove the desire for a modern, data-driven solution.

AI was intended to remedy this situation, in particular by using historical data for realistic forecasts and optimized processes. However, the company lacked both methodological and technological AI expertise internally. A preliminary project demonstrated that without external support, neither the IT department nor specialist departments could carry out a viable initiative.

In addition, ambitious requirements for the new system demanded realistic planning, accurate delivery dates, simulation scenarios, inventory calculations, and mapping the flow of materials across locations. The need was not for a selective solution, but a strategically conceived, data-supported, overall strategy.

> **Our project clearly shows that successful AI implementation does not begin with technology, but with a clear strategy, realistic expectations, and a structured consulting approach.**

Daniel Picard, Head of Order Contral at Bilstein Group

The Solution

> SoftwareOne's independent consulting approach not only convinced us, but also helped us move forward. It was only through this collaboration that we realized what data we needed to use AI effectively. And above all, that the investment was worthwhile and that we would benefit from the added value

Thomas Schulz, Head of Order Centre at Bilstein Group

Preparing for Artificial Intelligence

SoftwareOne intentionally chose not to rush into a technological solution. Instead, it opted for a well-founded, step-by-step approach. The consulting approach was divided into three phases: Envision, Discover, and Solution – the foundation of the 'Intelligence Fabric' strategy.

- Envision
  In this phase, SoftwareOne and the Bilstein Group's specialist departments developed a vision for AI-supported production planning. The collaboration aimed to identify specific use cases, define realistic goals, and align all stakeholders. This phase established a clear picture of what AI can and cannot achieve in Bilstein's specific context.
- Discover
  An analysis of existing data sources (including SAP) was conducted to establish technical and organizational framework conditions. At the same time, the Discover phase served to build knowledge as the Bilstein team was methodically introduced to topics such as machine learning, forecasting models, and data quality. The outcome was a common understanding of the prerequisites for successful AI application.
- Solution (planned)
  The next step is a proof of value (PoV) using a specific production line. We demonstrate how completion dates can be predicted much more accurately using historical data. Real factors such as machine utilization, shift models, and downtime are all taken into consideration. The PoV forms the basis for the decision to roll out the system to other production lines.

The Result

Sustainable AI integration

Although the project is still in the implementation phase, tangible progress has already been made thanks to structured consulting. The focus was not only on technological development, but above all on enabling the company to use AI effectively in the long term.

A key milestone was the creation of a sound plan that serves as a basis for decisions on further investments. The 'Intelligence Fabric' strategy provided a realistic, implementable plan with clear goals, feasibility studies, and implementation phases.

In addition, a strategic partnership was formed between the Bilstein Group and SoftwareOne to anchor AI in the company permanently.

> **Without SoftwareOne's structured approach, we likely would have failed due to the complexity of our AI project. The combination of technological expertise, strategic consulting, and close collaboration allowed us to develop a viable AI strategy—and build the necessary knowledge internally.**

Thomas Schulz, Head of Order Centre at Bilstein Group

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