CASE STUDY

4All-Portal Case Study

Cross Media – die Daten und Netz GmbH

Using Aspose.Total to build Word and Excel based reports

Daniel Luecke, Division Director, September 2nd, 2014

About Cross Media

Cross Media are the developers of 4All-Portal – a highly flexible publishing platform for creating, managing and publishing media content.

Various modules enable flexible scaling of the software – so that the portal grows with your requirements. Regardless whether it's creating brochures or business cards, or automating catalogue production from your stock list or the integrative Media Asset Management solution, the 4All-Portal is an enterprise publishing platform that will take care of your requirements.

The individual 4All-Portal modules can be installed on a single server or on a number of servers to meet load balancing and redundancy requirements.

Some of the modules are:

- Media Asset Management
- Catalog
- Personalization
- PIM
- Workflow Server
- Reporting Server

4All-Portal brings centralized management and marketing features to organizations to ensure Corporate Design, file based workflows and information availability.

Problem

The product management of the 4All-Portal decided to extend the 4All-Portal functionality by developing a feature called "Template Engine". This centralized feature should replace the available PDF export functionality and bring new templating options for new reporting engines.

One of the main problems with the existing solution was, that templates were "designed" in XML-code. So customer had to learn and understand the XML-syntax.

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Because this feature is available already in the smallest version of the 4All-Portal, nearly every customer would benefit from this enhancement.

Solution

The product management decided to change the way templates were designed. User should be able to create templates with Word and Excel. Those templates could be created by a larger group of users and are easier to understand.

Within the definition/design of such a template, a kind of "repeater-element" should enable the user to hand over multiple objects that are then shown in a list.

Based on that idea, a list of expected features was created. Multiple products were checked according to that list to finally end up with 3 products that were tested in detail.

During that test

- performance,
- compatibility for different file types, and
- cross-platform / OS support

were scrutinised intensely and in the end, Aspose came out as the clear winner.

After the product decision process, the developer started to create a syntax for defining templates. Microsoft Word already provides a basic syntax that is called "mail merge" – that is well documented and completely supported by Aspose.Words.

A syntax for Excel files had to be developed.

After the technical concept was decided, the developer started to replace the existing module with the new library from Aspose.

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Figure 1: User can select a layout for the PDF report.
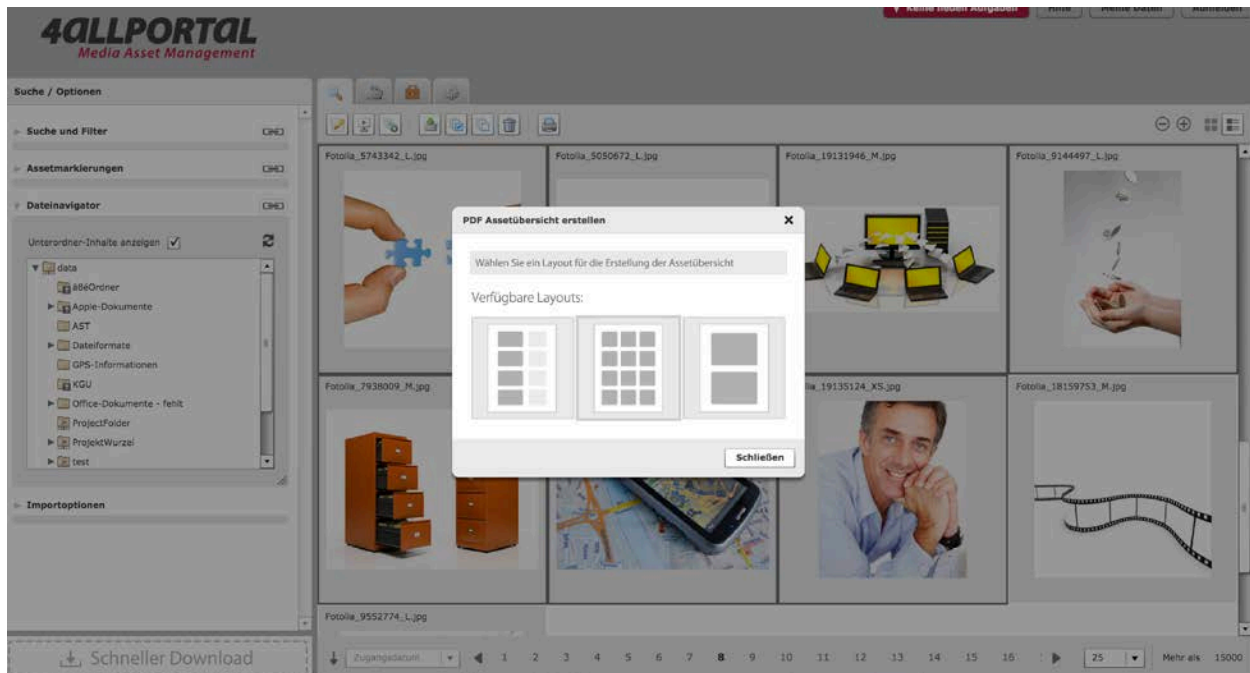

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Figure 2: A generated PDF Report based on an individual template.

Experience

Finding a solution: During the product evaluation, the Aspose trial license helped to find quick answers to all the questions a developer had. Even the sales support was able to answer all commercial questions right away.

Implementation: The implementation of the Aspose library was comparatively easy. If there were questions, the documentation or support was able to help.

The replacement of the existing solution brought one very significant advantage with it, in that the new code was much shorter and easier to maintain.

Outcome: The developer was surprised by the performance and structure of the library. All required functionality was delivered without any significant problems.

Next Steps

Because of our good experience with Aspose, the existing code and all new features and functionality will be based on the Aspose library as well.

Summary

Aspose is a mature library providing a lot of functionality. It is self-explanatory, easy to use and impresses by its quality and performance. Our developer is looking forward to integrate more new features with Aspose.