COVER STORY SERVICE 4.0 IS ABOUT DEVELOPING SMART BUSINESS MODELS

One step ahead of the trend

Service 4.0 — commonly used as a catchword, it is often not clear what exactly is behind it. Closely related to Service 4.0 are usually the possibilities and opportunities that arise from digitization. Innosoft GmbH from Dortmund recognized this early on and dynamically adapted its own solution portfolio — for example, with a consistent conversion to cloud-enabled web applications, which also offer a high potential for individualization. And the next step is already in the works: Everything is becoming mobile. How Innosoft does not only try to meet the trends, but also to be always one step ahead, SERVICETODAY editor **Michael Braun** tried to fathom in an interview with the development manager **Lukas Offerhaus** and **Peter Ebbrecht**, one of the managing directors of Innosoft GmbH.

Michael Braun: "Service 4.0" is a buzzword on everyone's lips at the moment – what do you understand by it at Innosoft?
Lukas Offerhaus: "Service 4.0" is usually used in a very abstract way and often dismissed as a fashionable slogan. Ultimately, however, it conceals a very valuable project: Improve existing services and create new ones using digiti-zation methods. The sheer endless possibilities offered by big data, machine learning, IoT or even the cloud make the subject very complex and difficult to grasp.
Peter Ebbrecht: For me, this is the consistent integration of everyone involved in the service process, from the service technician to the customer to the machine.

Lukas Offerhaus: And this is where we, as a software manufacturer for service companies, are particularly involved and challenged.

Michael Braun: Innosoft has faced up to the change and consistently oriented its solutions towards cloud-enabled web applications – can you say something about the differences between the two concepts "installed application" vs. "web application" from your perspective as a developer?
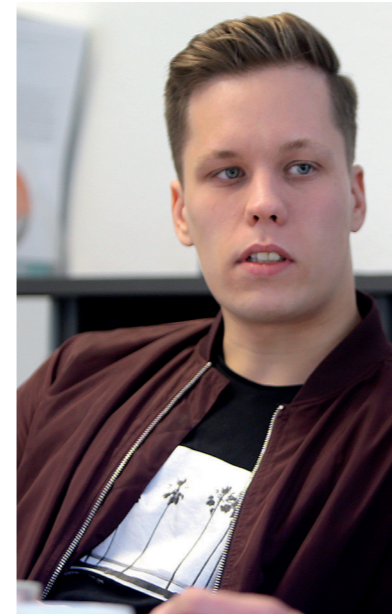*Lukas Offerhaus:* The huge advantage for the users of a web application compared to the classic desktop installation is its flexibility. Users can access the application on all their devices, regardless of platform. It does not matter whether they use the software on their Windows computer, Android smartphone or iPad.
Peter Ebbrecht: The cloud application is aimed at all those who are interested in the direct use of systems that are available at any time without having to worry about IT systems. In addition to platform independence, the high scalability in the company is also important.

Michael Braun: Which advantages of web installations do you see especially in the international context of globally operating companies?
Lukas Offerhaus: For the users, it is certainly the availability at any time and from any location, for the IT system administrators the great advantage is the central administration. There are no local clients that need to be maintained, updated or installed. After all, a modern browser is available on every device these days.

Michael Braun: You have developed an online Customer Portal - what are the capabilities of this portal?

What is behind the keyword "Service 4.0"? Peter Ebbrecht (right) and Lukas Offerhaus have very clear ideas about this

Mobile solutions should simplify the work for service technicians, says Lukas Offerhaus.

Peter Ebbrecht: The Customer Portal meets the demands of today's consumers to be able to access a maximum amount of information at any time. This is a further step towards integrating the customer into the service process.

Michael Braun: How is the customer involved?
Peter Ebbrecht: The customer gets access to the information about his machine. For example, he can view the manufacturer's service documentation, activity reports from the technicians or the current UVV inspection online. Keyword ticket transparency: The customer is transparently involved in the problem solution.
Lukas Offerhaus: We provide a standard component that allows our customers to create a service product that is expected in today's market. It is important to us that our customers retain control over the degree of transparency they wish to disclose to their customers. It is precisely this indispensable flexibility that naturally confronts us with permanent challenges during development.

Michael Braun: In what way? And how do you solve this task?
Lukas Offerhaus: We focus our development efforts on forming a solid, standardized application core that is highly configurable. This configuration can be done by our customers themselves. Alternatively, of course, we also offer the necessary consulting services and let our customers benefit from our experience in this area.
Peter Ebbrecht: The demand for increased transparency is constantly evolving in our society; everyone wants to be able to access more and more information. We take this trend into account, but leave it up to the manufacturer to decide how far he wants to open up to his customers. The modular system we provide enables our customers to react quickly to changing requirements and adjust the degree of transparency as required.

Michael Braun: You also offer mobile solutions – what can they do and where do they support the technical service?
Peter Ebbrecht: The mobile client is the link between back office and technician. Basically, our mobile solutions bring technicians and the company closer together: they are provided with more information and later report back more information to the head office.
Lukas Offerhaus: One focus is to simplify the input and retrieval of information for the technician on site. The lower barriers ensure that the quality of service and the quality of the feedback data increases. The software used on a daily basis plays a significant role in binding technicians to their own company.

Michael Braun: If you look into the future - what next steps do you expect for service in the software environment?
Peter Ebbrecht: An even stronger networking. Customers, machines and technicians will move closer together

Manufacturers can decide for themselves how far they want to open up to customers, says Peter Ebbrecht.

digitally. Mobile devices and the devices in the back office will merge more and more. You can already see it now. Technologies that are still in their infancy today will become the standard. Expert knowledge will increasingly be digitally projected onto end devices. Companies must have a global presence, but they cannot have the highly qualified technicians on site everywhere, so it will be the know-how that goes on the road rather than the people who have it.
Lukas Offerhaus: We also see great potential in the area of machine learning. Both with regard to the condition of machines, such as predictive maintenance, and in our special area, i.e. the scheduling of service technicians. We assume that on this basis there is still a lot of potential for optimization that cannot be easily identified by humans.
Peter Ebbrecht: It is likely that in the future intelligent systems will send technicians on their way because they already know that he will be needed at a certain place on a certain date. This will certainly be one of the next steps in service.