

Global Pharmaceutical and Cosmetics Manufacturer Finds the Right Formula with Independent Software Support



Pierre Fabre

Client Profile: Pierre Fabre is a French multinational pharmaceutical and cosmetics company, founded in 1962. The company specializes in the use of natural-origin, active-botanical ingredients and the R&D of dermo-cosmetics, prescription medicines, oncological treatments, and family health products.

Industry: Manufacturing and Retail

Geography: Headquartered in Castres, France with subsidiaries in 45 countries and distribution to 130 countries globally

Revenue: €2.3 billion (\$2.7 billion USD)

Employees: 11,000

Applications: Oracle Database [Versions 8, 9, 10, 11, 12]

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— Christophe Pélissier, IT Operations Manager, Pierre Fabre

Approaching three decades of experience in the industry, Christophe Pélissier, IT operations manager at Pierre Fabre, is a dedicated practitioner of IT service management strategies based on the ITIL framework. He commented, "We use ITIL principles to ensure that all IT projects are fully aligned with the company's business goals and that the optimal policies and procedures are in place for IT to support these objectives on an ongoing basis."

Remaining viable in both the highly competitive pharmaceutical and cosmetics sectors places extraordinary expectations on even the most resilient of IT teams. Pélissier elaborated, "Our business segments are all very innovative and constantly launching new projects, but they aren't necessarily always thinking about what it takes to actually support the new applications."

The costs of infrastructure modifications and the procedural updates to the company's ITIL runbook, can be significant. Pélissier stated, "With a fixed budget, it's frequently very challenging to operationalize new initiatives and support them with the appropriate levels of service."

He continued, "Despite our extensive portfolio of projects, everything we do in IT really just comes down to two themes: service quality and economic efficiency."

Finding Beauty Within

The desire for IT to be perceived as a consistent business enabler drives Pélissier to constantly validate that his team is delivering maximum value across the cosmetics and pharmaceutical manufacturer's business lines. "Finding a more cost-effective way to do something has a 'snowball' effect: Once we're able to free up money, we can invest in additional optimization projects that, in turn, further add to our savings and efficiencies," he enthused.

One such initiative was a multiapplication cloud migration that reduced associated operating costs by 30% in four months. Pélissier recalled, "The savings paid for the project. In fact, the migration of Microsoft Dynamics 2009 — one of our largest applications — was so fast and recouped so much money that we're also starting a similar move with our Microsoft Dynamics 2012 instances, a project that we previously wouldn't have been able to even contemplate until much later."

Befitting a company that emphasizes family values and a sharing, cooperative culture, Pélissier is extremely proud of the internal survey results achieved by this team, which has scored above a 95% satisfaction rate for the past three-plus years.

Benefits

- **Liberated budget invested in additional cost-saving optimizations:** Savings achieved by switching to independent, third-party support for Oracle Database fund key projects and further reduce operating costs.
- **Enhanced incident resolution:** Collaboration with Rimini Street database specialists facilitates a deeper understanding of issues and a focus on process improvements.
- **Improved service quality:** The company leverages the expertise of Primary Support Engineers for optimal application configuration, hardware enhancements, and architectural modifications.

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Leveraging its investments in process optimization, IT collaborates with users to provide precise, actionable guidance and spends time to understand the unique, evolving needs of individual business segments. "We used to handle problems very reactively, focusing only on addressing the immediate issue. With the investments we've been able to make, we can now go much deeper and put action plans in place that continually improve IT performance and functionality," remarked Pélissier.

Database Vendor a Fly in the Ointment

Pierre Fabre has a significant reliance on multiple versions of Oracle databases. However, despite its criticality, the vendor had become a persistent obstacle for Pélissier in striking the optimal balance of delivering exemplary service across his entire application portfolio at optimal cost.

With 70% of Pierre Fabre's database footprint running on versions that had already passed end-of-life deadlines for full support, Oracle applied constant pressure to upgrade or substitute cloud-based replacements. Pélissier recalled, "Our databases and associated applications had all become highly tuned over a lengthy period to perfectly serve our company's requirements. Why should we change something that delivered exactly what we need?"

Maintaining compliance with Oracle support policies was also complex and ultimately very costly. Despite the company's significant efforts to comply, inevitably every time Oracle commissioned a license audit, an error was found, with each infraction incurring a considerable financial penalty.

Ultimately, Pélissier felt that there was not a sufficient return on investment in Oracle support. "We license expensive software from Oracle, but the price of support also was very high and had no relationship to the level of service we actually received. On top of this, Oracle invariably gave the same response to all of our support tickets: 'come back to us when you've upgraded,'" he recounted.

"Funding an upgrade every time support is needed just isn't feasible. Very often, we were completely stuck. We calculated that in addition to the licensing fees, we would need to allocate 50% of a team member's time just to keep us compliant. We just couldn't do it."

Rimini Street: Better at First Blush, Flawless Experts

The decision to switch to Rimini Street independent, third-party support brought immediate benefits. "From efficiently resolving problems to providing advice on configuration, hardware purchases, and architecture modifications, Rimini Street delivers a level of service that we never received from Oracle," celebrated Pélissier.

For Pélissier, this quality and depth of expertise are what distinguish Rimini Street from other support providers. He emphasized, "The people at Rimini Street are Oracle Database specialists. They're not just technicians; they are experienced experts who understand the functional aspects of the software. Rimini Street people really know their trade."

Reflecting on the third-party support for Oracle Database he receives since leaving Oracle, "Trust, professionalism, and active listeners are the words that immediately come to mind," Pélissier shared.

"I'm sure that almost every CIO in the world would agree: Oracle is just very, very expensive. The move to Rimini Street support was not complex and the large amount of money we save is reinvested in new projects. Our ITIL runbook accurately reflects the optimal processes to support each application, and subsequently, we've been able to deliver a much higher level of service to the business units and collaboratively partner with them to plan for the future. It has been a win-win for everyone."