Founded in Berlin in 1923 by Max Conrad, Conrad Electronic SE is an omni-channel electronics retailer that interacts with customers, suppliers and partners across Europe. Conrad’s advanced distribution center enables it to send more than 40,000 packages a day, 70,000 at peak times, and nine million packages a year to customers in more than 150 countries. The company is focused on consumer and specialist electronics lines, including computing equipment, multimedia, modeling, home automation, tools, electronic components, batteries and power, and motoring products. With more than one million articles from leading manufacturers and distributors for business customers on conrad.biz, its B2B marketplace, and around 750,000 articles for private customers on conrad.de, the online shop, the Bavarian family-owned business is one of the leading omni-channel technology distributors. Conrad handles nine million site visits per month in Germany, and operates 30 retail stores across the continent.

Delivering updated data to retailing websites and partners
It’s a problem all online retailers have to solve: To sell your products via channels other than your own, you need to supply those channels with complete, accurate, up-to-date product data. Many channels require dedicated feeds, data in XML format, and an integration with your systems via an API.

Conrad Electronic had staff members providing product data manually, but, given the complexity of SAP and other systems storing the data, that approach wasn’t able to keep up with the demand for data feeds. “We had to provide the data in minutes,” says Tobias Baumgart, Lead Expert, Platform Architecture, Conrad Electronic SE.

“In the beginning, we were using an expensive proprietary analytics software and scripts running on a server. But based on the high license costs of products, poor maintenance capabilities, and the increasing volume of data and demands for data feeds, we decided to look for a professional ETL solution.”

Why Talend?
To find the best solution, Conrad conducted a proof of concept and evaluated contenders on a set of simple but telling metrics. “Talend received the most points,” says Baumgart. “We also preferred Talend because it’s a Java code-generator and has the easiest-to-use interface. Also, the Talend team was far more engaged and helpful than teams from the other providers.” To help with the evaluation and implementation, Conrad worked with Avantgarde Labs from Dresden.

Conrad initially purchased Talend Data Integration, then added Talend ESB, which it used in conjunction with Apache Karaf and ActiveMQ to build a middleware tier for the Conrad e-commerce platform. All product-relevant data exported from SAP is imported by Talend ETL to the e-commerce platform, then exported in various formats to members of the Conrad ecosystem. “We’re exporting over 500 feeds with data every day in a range of formats to our channels, partners, customers, external services, internal services and so on,” says Baumgart. “Data is coming from our product-information system—which is in the 40GB range—from our product-recommendation engine, and from other sources. It all feeds into a 2TB Oracle Exadata e-commerce data warehouse that contains information on more than a million products.”
Conrad is a cloud-first company, as Baumgart explains: “First, our cloud strategy gives us more flexibility. It also helps us focus more on valuable work for our customers by using native services. We are also working with our strategic partner Google to develop innovative and reusable solutions for our customers.”

Helping Conrad's B2B business succeed

Baumgart says Conrad conducts its online business on the Talend-powered e-commerce platform. “With that platform in place, we can provide data to separate channels, so that when, for example, a customer is searching via Google for an LED TV, the data that populates the search results on each shopping website is coming directly from the Talend ETL on our side. And we're now able to do daily updates to keep that data current.” He says Conrad systems now deliver product data, prices, availability and other related information to nearly all of the company’s channel partners, including price comparison sites, search engines and marketplaces.

To meet the high in-house demand for data feeds, the company also created a self-service, Talend ETL-based tool—the Conrad Data Centrifuge, which makes it possible for the company's business department to create catalogs themselves, thereby reducing the need for more IT development resources. These catalogs are used internally to feed other systems and are sent to customers. Conrad is increasingly focused on the B2B market, and has launched the conrad.biz marketplace specifically to serve it. “We've become an integration supplier for digital customers, which enables them to automate their supply chains,” says Baumgart. Talend ETL serves as the backbone of our e-commerce data supply function. Because it allows us to provide individualized digital catalogs for our customers to load into their purchasing systems, it has become key to our strategic B2B business. That use case is a perfect example of how Talend ETL directly supports and enables Conrad's overall business strategy.”