UNITRON

FINDING THE B IN BPA

There's a temptation to think about Business Process Management (BPM) and Automation (BPA) mainly as IT issues—an arcane set of procedural languages that only business analysts and a few coders need to master. For BinteQ, a leading Belgian consultancy and BPA software provider, nothing could be further from the truth. BinteQ, a Progress Application Partner since 2009, has achieved striking success with clients in the Benelux by understanding that BPA is more about business than it is about generating software code.

"We go way beyond simply automating a process. We work with clients to discover the processes that drive their strategic and operational objectives," said Sebastian Van de Sype, CEO of BinteQ. "We offer business process automation solutions for all levels of an organization—operational, managerial, as well as the executive level—but BPA begins from understanding the absolute root of a particular business's success."

AUTOMATING PRIORITY PROCESSES FOR BUSINESS ADVANTAGE

Not all business processes can be equally weighted in terms of business criticality. BPA represents an investment of time and resources, so priority should be given to processes that are most critical to the business. Critical might mean that a process is a driver of profitability or strategic differentiation, or in some cases, both.

BinteQ has worked with the Progress Platform to develop BPA solutions and frameworks that place high priority processes into an effective business context. For example, BinteQ's Business Integration solution unites key processes across accounting, logistics, finance and sales in a centralized administration system. BinteQ clients can take advantage of this solution to automate processes that translate into profitability when properly managed across multiple business departments. Additionally, BinteQ offers solutions that report and interpret business information to enable decision making. In these cases, the technological strength of the BinteQ solution is complemented by insights into which processes and data streams are relevant to making sound business decisions.

BinteQ recently helped its client, Unitron, solve a perplexing challenge by putting critical business processes first. Unitron is a developer and manufacturer of sophisticated medical devices. The company is innovative not only with its products, but also in its organizational structure. Unitron has adopted process-oriented working as a company philosophy. In approaching the BPA process, BinteQ worked with Unitron to explore what it was that made Unitron successful with its customers over the long term. "Customer confidence was one of the most important factors in the decision to place orders and remain committed to the client relationship year after year," said Ard-Jan Hamelink,

CHALLENGE

Revamp operational business processes to protract customer confidence

SOLUTION

BinteQ's Progress® OpenEdge®-based business process automation solution

BENEFIT

Substantial improvements in efficiency—reducing RMA process times from 90 to 30 minutes

Operations Manager at Unitron. Customers of course expected economical, high quality manufacturing, but they placed equal weight on support and follow-through for any repairs or defect corrections. It was in the context of this finding that the process of repairs and Return Merchandise Authorization (RMA) emerged as a priority for BPA.

A review of Unitron's RMA process found that it was not running optimally as the company dealt with an increased number of repairs that had come with growth. Despite a high degree of focus and discipline from the staff, the automation of the process was inefficient, spanning ten separate IT systems. Email, faxes, home-made databases and spreadsheets were the glue that held RMA together.

KEEPING BUSINESS STRATEGY IN FOCUS

From a business perspective, RMA was a negative in both operational and strategic terms. It cost more than it had to. RMA staffers felt as if they were constantly catching up on a workload. Strategically, a weakness in support had the potential to hurt long-lasting customer relationships. For these reasons, RMA became the first business process that BinteQ worked on with Unitron for automation.

"One immediate issue that emerged from our work with BinteQ was that RMA was not so much a process but rather a collection of processes and supporting systems," said Hamelink. "RMA can be difficult to manage for any manufacturer, but we have to deal with multiple manufacturing customers, each with its own return requirements. We had to find the most critical processes and pay attention to them first." BinteQ worked with Unitron to understand the process ramifications of different products requiring distinct patterns of communication, routing and handling. With dozens of customers, each of whom had multiple products, Unitron had to stay on top of hundreds of repair and return routing processes. BinteQ approached the RMA situation using its proven data/information/knowledge methodology. Analyzing data from the client's multiple RMA systems led to the development of knowledge that BinteQ could use to automate the RMA processes.

BinteQ's recommendation was to create a selection of RMA process templates that could handle myriad RMA scenarios. For example, in one situation, a customer might require that the end user receive an email notification of receipt of the returned product. In another case, the customer might require a phone call, and so forth. BinteQ's template approach enabled its client to implement a custom, automated RMA process for each product.

As realized by BinteQ's use of Progress Software BPM tools, the RMA BPA solution made it possible for a single bar code scan at intake to trigger an orchestrated set of automated process steps. The bar code scan creates an event that queries a unified RMA product database. Each product is matched to a template, or completely custom, RMA process. The process automatically logs the RMA transaction into the ERP system and creates a routing and logistics record for use in fulfilling the completion of the repair and return. Automated reminders inform personnel and customer staff along the way.

BENEFITS

"We elected to work with BinteQ when we saw how well they understood the importance of decision support in a good transactional system," said Hamelink. "That, combined with their innate sense of how an organization truly uses technology to automate processes, made them the clear choice for the RMA project. Today we're seeing major gains in efficiency with the BinteQ solution. Processes that used to take 90 minutes now take 30. The RMA staff has a much higher degree of awareness of which products are in the repair and return queue. And, best of all, our customers have fewer calls to make as automated messaging keeps everyone up to date on RMA statuses."

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>
> *Ard-Jan Hamelink, Operations Manager, Unitron*

PROGRESS

Today Unitron is happily using the same solution for their service, maintenance and field repair requests.

A FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

BinteQ's success with Unitron was based on a flexible and solid technical solution built with Progress Software tools. However, the underlying enabler of that success was an appreciation for one of Unitron's important strategic needs. BinteQ is able to synthesize these two factors and develop BPA solutions that address day-to-day facts on the ground while supporting the client's operational and strategic objectives. Going forward, BinteQ's business orientation in BPA will be its calling card as it expands its Progress-based BPA practice. With Unitron as a key win, BinteQ is well-positioned to leverage this experience and bring this kind of success to all of its clients, old and new.

BINTEQ

POWERED BY PROGRESS

BinteQ is a leading Belgian BPA/BPM consultancy and Progress® OpenEdge®-based ERP software provider. The company is successfully expanding its business with its business process automation (BPA) solutions, which are also based on the Progress development platform. For BinteQ, the "B" in BPA is the key to success. Working with clients in the Benelux, BinteQ has thrived by understanding that BPA is more about business than it is about process automation. In the case of Unitron, a developer and manufacturer of sophisticated medical devices, BinteQ used their distinctive BPA approach and solution to revamp some of the client's operational processes. For example, with Return Merchandise Authorization (RMA), BinteQ created process templates that could be adapted to multiple RMA workflows. As a result of the new RMA solution, Unitron realized substantial improvements in efficiency – reducing RMA process times from 90 to 30 minutes. The company is now also applying the solution to their service, maintenance and field repair requests.

PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation (NASDAQ: PRGS) is a global software company that simplifies the development, deployment and management of business applications on-premise or in the cloud, on any platform or device, to any data source, with enhanced performance, minimal IT complexity and low total cost of ownership.

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