



Microsoft Customer Solution Customer Solution Case Study



Overview

Country or Region: The Netherlands

Industry: Commercial Property Development

Customer Profile

Bouwfonds Property Development is an all-round developer of residential, office and shopping projects in the Netherlands. Its head office is located in Hoevelaken and it currently has around 600 employees in the Netherlands, and around 800 employees in Europe.

Business Situation

Bouwfonds decided to extend its reach and develop new business opportunities across Europe. To do so, the organisation would have to consolidate and upgrade its decentralised client- and customer-database structure.

Solution

Bouwfonds introduced Microsoft® CRM and BizTalk® Server 2004 to consolidate its existing multiple database solutions into a single package.

Benefits

- Reduces time for mailing from days to minutes.
- Multi-language functionality supports international ambitions.
- Facilitates company's e-business plans.
- User-friendly design saves time and cost in training.
- Integrates simply with existing Microsoft toolsets.

Property Developer Ramp up Efficiency

“The application is very user friendly. Normally the largest part of such an investment is getting employees up to speed using it, but our staff have adapted to Microsoft CRM very quickly.”

André Spruitenburg, Head of Information Management Department of Property Development at Bouwfonds.

Bouwfonds Property Development is an all-round developer of residential, office, and shopping projects in the Netherlands. It recently took the decision to develop new business opportunities across Europe. To do so, the organisation would have to upgrade its existing database solution and consolidate the numerous spreadsheet-based data collection models that were in existence company-wide. This fragmented approach to data collection and storage was hindering efficiency, being time-consuming, error-prone, and incompatible with Bouwfonds' growing ambitions. Working with Avanade, the company replaced this architecture with a single solution—Microsoft® CRM, integrated with Microsoft BizTalk® Server 2004. Now Bouwfonds Ontwikkeling is benefiting from a standardised solution that allows staff to rapidly update and share information on a company-wide basis.

Situation

Bouwfonds Property Development develops residential, office, and retail projects in the Netherlands. Employing approximately 600 staff in the Netherlands, Bouwfonds Property Development is part of the Bouwfonds Group. Its head office is located in Amersfoort, and besides Amersfoort it maintains regional offices in Zwolle, Haarlem, Delft, and Eindhoven.

Buoyed by domestic success, the group decided to extend its focus across Europe. To manage the greater volumes of customer data this expansion would create, Bouwfonds realised that it would have to address its decentralised and fragmented database architecture.

The nature of Bouwfonds' business requires that it frequently compile and maintain large volumes of information on existing and potential customers. As Bouwfonds works closely with regional governments, it must ensure that it has accurate contact details for agency staff. In addition, the group must maintain customer records for ten years, to comply with internal policy.

Traditionally, Bouwfonds had compiled and updated this information using a number of separate systems based on different spreadsheet programs, together with its own internally developed client information system, called Husky.

However, the lack of integration among these systems meant that it was increasingly difficult for staff to share information and increase group-wide efficiency, and the system was contributing significantly to the workload of staff.

Compounding this problem, the market was demanding that Bouwfonds manage so called 'combination building-projects' (building a range of facilities such as offices, residential

and shopping together in one project), rather than a single office building, home or parking facility.

This new type of business put further urgency on the need for a company-wide relation and client contact registration system. Now the business-relations of Bouwfonds were no longer single persons or companies, but whole teams or collaborations of organisations. Its systems were simply not prepared to cope with the integrated information necessary to adequately service such a large client and customer base.

André Spruitenburg, Head of the Information Management Department of Property Development at Bouwfonds, says: "We had to deal with more people with many different roles, and in the near future with more international customers. This meant our staff had to be able to communicate, and share information between locations and, increasingly, across borders."

Solution

With its environment of decentralised, unintegrated client databases, obviously not adequate to cope with the increased volume of information, Bouwfonds turned to Microsoft® partner Avanade for help. Following a review of various systems, it was decided that Bouwfonds would benefit substantially from consolidating its fragmented architecture into a single, integrated solution.

Avanade developed a solution based on Microsoft CRM and Microsoft BizTalk® Server 2004. The solution involved BizTalk Server acting as the integration hub through which all communications between legacy systems would be conducted. Meanwhile, Microsoft CRM would transform Bouwfonds's decentralised database infrastructure into a consolidated, standardised network whereby

customer information could rapidly be accessed and amended.

The decision to go with the Microsoft product suite turned out to be a relatively simple one based, in part, on the fact that Bouwfonds staff were already familiar with other Microsoft solutions. This familiarity meant that staff could quickly get up to speed with Microsoft CRM. "In fact, just two hours' training was enough for staff to feel comfortable using the new solution," says Spruitenburg. "This had the added bonus of minimising disruption and costs in the implementation phase of this project," he adds.

Having a partner like Avanade, which has the deep technological expertise to support the implementation, was critical to the project's success. It meant that Bouwfonds received the full benefit of the Microsoft technology used. Moreover, it is a solution that will allow open-ended integration with similar tools as the company grows its international business. Sebastian Hek, Senior Associate Consultant, Avanade, says: "Bouwfonds already use Microsoft® SharePoint® Portal Server 2003 as a portal to provide data to users straight out of CRM. Having BizTalk Server 2004 in place lays the foundations for further expansion into Microsoft territory later on."

Bouwfonds had briefly considered upgrading its in-house Husky solution, admitted Spruitenburg, but it soon became apparent that such a strategy would not lead to the integrated ICT-architecture Bouwfonds needed now and even more in the near future.

Following a six month test phase which concluded in August 2004, Bouwfonds went live with Microsoft CRM and BizTalk Server in October of that year. Initially, some 200 users transferred to the new system, with the migration of customer details taking place simultaneously.

A degree of customisation was required to ensure formatting issues did not become problematic, but the migration took place on schedule. Over the coming months, the remaining staff in the company's various regional locations will make the transition to Microsoft CRM.

Benefits

The centralised nature of the previous architecture left huge scope for improvement and Bouwfonds has discovered a raft of benefits across the board as a result of implementing the solution. One event in particular illustrates how much time, effort, and resources the new solution has saved Bouwfonds.

From Days to Minutes

Traditionally, when the group needed to compile a group mailing—an event that occurred several times a year—each separate location had to export all the details from their various databases, before sending them, in various formats, to the central office. Here, staff would be occupied sometimes for days sorting through and organising this information, before finally sending out the required group mail. The whole process was expensive, unnecessarily time-consuming, and presented a lot of room for errors to occur, which didn't fit with the high quality-standards of Bouwfonds.

Now that process takes minutes, because of the built-in functionality in the company-wide use of Microsoft CRM. With a few keystrokes, the different locations can supply the relevant information in a standardised form that requires no intervention on the part of the operator.

Spruitenburg says: "We have gained productivity in terms of maintaining, collecting and being able to access that data. This means we can spend more time on

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For more information about Avanade products and services, visit the Web site at: www.avanade.com

For more information about Bouwfonds Property Development products and services, visit the Web site at: www.bouwfondspropertydevelopment.com

things like looking after our business relations and our customers.”

Assists Growth of E-Business Channels

As Bouwfonds grows its international business, it plans to develop its e-business channels. As Spruitenburg explains: “We are looking to expand and invest in e-business. Changing our processes and the way in which we store customers’ data is a precondition to the success of the e-business.”

User-Friendly and Quick to Learn

Partly because of the familiarity with Microsoft products, and partly as a consequence of the solution’s intuitive design, Bouwfonds staff have rapidly adapted to the new system. This has resulted in savings on two fronts: minimal training time and minimal disruption to the on-going processes of the company. After just two hours of training, employees were comfortable using the solution.

Multi-language Functionality Supports Bouwfond’s Ambitions

The company’s growing international ambitions require data to be collected and exchanged from numerous locations and the linguistic barriers that this presents could have proved prohibitive to Bouwfonds. However, the multi-language aspect of Microsoft CRM means that the company can share information from different locations without having to worry about the translation costs or fears that the information may have been corrupted during translation.

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Software and Services

■ Solutions

- Microsoft Business Solutions CRM
- Microsoft BizTalk Server 2004

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