

Case Study

Avanade helps Achmea develop faster, cheaper and more efficient portals with Microsoft SharePoint

Scenario

With 8 million customers, Achmea is the Netherlands' largest insurance group and the market leader in health care and non-life insurances. Familiar brand names include Centraal Beheer, Zilveren Kruis and Interpolis.

Within Achmea, a large number of products are put on the market under various brand umbrellas, creating overlap between the products on offer. It may be the case, for instance, that several insurers offer online travel insurance. Achmea builds individual portals for each of its brands. These portals can be anything from recruitment pages to mini-campaigns or self-service sites via which customers can arrange their own insurance or request a quote.

The vast majority of these sites are built in the same way and offer the same functionalities, such as news feeds, social media integration and process automation. Previously, the design and build of these websites' functional elements were decentralized and had to be done afresh each time, creating unnecessary duplication of work and high project costs. On reviewing the fundamental IT process, a key opportunity was identified to supply the generic website components, which could be used or reused for multiple sites.

To realize this opportunity, Achmea partnered with Avanade. The collaboration would produce the so-called 'factory model' for portals using the Microsoft SharePoint platform. Standardization and reuse are the Portal Factory's primary KPIs. As Microsoft specialist, Avanade was the obvious

partner of choice. Furthermore, Avanade was able to offer favorable construction conditions thanks to its Bratislava Delivery Center (BDC). Key factors at play here were cost benefit, work ethic and highly skilled SharePoint Specialists as well as degree of accessibility and scalability for Achmea.

Approach

The collaboration began in May 2012, with a view to: Increased efficiency, shorter time-to-market and cost efficiency through the reuse of generic components. Avanade and Achmea work side-by-side on the three main disciplines of design, component build and front-end/portal configuration. In identifying, developing and centrally treating as many generic components as possible, (brand-specific) websites can be built in significantly shorter time, at reduced cost and to higher quality.

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–Eppo van der Plas, Achmea Component Factory manager

Avanade provides Achmea with both onshore and near-shore capacities. What began as a single team in Bratislava grew to become three teams, encompassing more than thirty members of staff in Bratislava and another four in the Netherlands dedicated full-time to the Achmea account. Avanade Netherlands advises, guides and ensures consistency with the team in Bratislava. Here, devised components are built and maintained in line with the Scrum methodology, creating a real advantage for Achmea in terms of scalability. This arrangement puts a large team of experts at the company’s disposal as and when required, removing the burden of Achmea having to take on staff.

Using generic components affords Achmea the opportunity to centralize the most labor-intensive components and separate build and maintenance from the implementation of individual brand portals.

“We’ve shown how our Bratislava Delivery Center makes it possible to develop reliable components in a very effective way,” says Jeroen Huitink, Solutions Architect at Avanade. “Ultimately, these components are of real worth to an organization such

as Achmea, as they enable future portal builds to happen much more quickly and efficiently.”

Outcome

The Portal Factory has been a real boost to efficiency. It has meant that, whenever a component is required for a portal, it’s just a case of configuration. The time-to-market on straightforward sites has fallen notably as a result: What previously was a period of six months from the concept stage to going live is now just three weeks. Since the introduction of the Component Factory, Achmea’s efficiency levels for the building of portals rose by 19 percent overall in 2013. Consequently, Achmea is in a position to significantly cut the costs of its online portals. “We’re very proud to have a unique tool in the Portal Factory. The collaboration with the Avanade teams has had a positive effect on our internal teams. It’s been an inspiration and the experience has changed our way of working,” says Eppo van der Plas, Achmea Component Factory manager. “The high quality of the generic components takes the professionalism, scalability and maintainability of our portals to another level. This is illustrated by the fact that SEO rankings of insurance sites across the board have risen and are easier to manage.”

About Achmea

With 8 million customers, Achmea is the Netherlands’ largest insurance group and the market leader in health care and non-life insurances. Familiar brand names include Centraal Beheer, Zilveren Kruis and Interpolis. Achmea was founded in 1811 by farmers. Employer and employee organizations as well as health insurance funds and mutual societies would later join to form part of the company. Each of these organizations held a societal role in their local area, which is why Achmea is a company with a cooperative nature.

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*–Eppo van der Plas
Achmea Component Factory manager*



About Avanade

Avanade provides business technology solutions and managed services based on a combination of insight, innovation and expert knowledge of Microsoft® technologies to help businesses achieve optimal results. In the same way we have helped thousands of other businesses, we can help you too to reduce costs, increase productivity and facilitate collaboration, allowing your business to better adapt to change and strengthen customer loyalty. Through our collaborative approach – both internally and with our partners and customers – we can help you get the results you want. Our expert knowledge is applied by a talented team of professionals, ready to help reap maximum return from your investments in technology. Avanade, majority-owned by Accenture, was established in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation and employs over 22,000 professionals across 20 countries. Additional information can be found at www.avanade.nl

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Netherlands

Almere
Phone +31 (0)36 547 5100
Info-nl@avanade.com

Eindhoven
Phone +31 (0)40 800 1950
Info-nl@avanade.com

North America

Seattle
Phone +1 206 239 5600
Americas@avanade.com

Europe

London
Phone +44 (0)20 7025 1000
Europe@avanade.com