The road to success in SharePoint can be easy

About the implementation of the company's Complaint Handling System in Rovese Group

Record of an interview in which the following people share their experience:
Krzysztof Patla — IT Director
Marcin Falkiewicz— IT Support Director
Agnieszka Zapolska — Group Customer Care Director
Jarosław Redko — After-Sales Service & Quality Director

The company's success is determined not just by marketing. A factor that has an increasing impact on building competitive advantage is the quality of customer service. Providing customer experience at the highest level is a task that is difficult and demanding high organisational maturity. Therefore, the support for this process is often subject to optimisation using IT tools.

The Rovese Group stood in the face of the challenge to replace the old complaint support system with a new one, which would be adapted to the conditions of a dynamic growth. We present the back room of the project from three different perspectives. At the very source, we will gain a knowledge about what are the challenges before after-sales service departments, how to meet them and how IT can help.

Residence of ROVESE SA in Kielce

ROVESE S.A. is one of the leading manufacturing companies in the European market with a Polish capital. The principal activity of the Rovese Group is the production and distribution of products for finishing and equipping bathrooms (sanitary ceramic products, ceramic tiles, shower cubicles, acrylic bathtubs and shower trays, bathroom furniture and other articles related to the room). Since 1998, the company has been listed on the Stock Exchange in Warsaw. The Rovese Capital Group is present on the Polish market and abroad.

The main direction of foreign sales are markets of Eastern Europe (Russia, Ukraine) and the countries of the European Union (i.a. Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Germany, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark). The Rovese Capital Group is taking steps to expand its business in foreign markets. The Rovese Group's objective is building a strong business Europe-wide organisation that allows to obtain and maintain leadership on the comprehensive bathroom equipment market and, consequently, providing long-term, stable growth of the company and satisfaction of its shareholders.

Selling is only half the battle

We asked Agnieszka Zapolska and Jaroslaw Redko about what the After-Sales Service means and what standards have to be met by the customer service department to make the customers satisfied

WEBCON: What is most important to the functioning of After-Sales Quality Department?

Agnieszka Zapolska (AZ):

The fundamental thing, in this case, is to establish work rules for the entire department and determining the extent of the department's responsibilities. In our case, the After-Sales process begins with the receipt of an order, to the commencement of use of the product without complaint or after making a complaint and its consideration. We provide full warranty, as well as post-warranty service.

Agnieszka Zapolska
Group Customer Care
Director

Jarosław Redko (JR):

It should also be noted that in the structure of After-Sales, there are Quality Departments, whose task is to consider comments that we receive from our customers and business partners, and to transfer the lessons learned to production departments. This allows us to implement continuous improvement cycle of our products.

„Currently, 50% of the way the company is perceived in the market depends on customer service."

- How do operations of the After-Sales Quality Department affect the image of the whole company?

AZ: It is estimated that currently 50% of how the company is perceived in the market depends precisely on customer service because the sales itself does not count, but whether the customer will want to make a purchase from us again and be willing to recommend us. Extremely important is to strive for a situation in which the customer, except that he or she will be satisfied with the purchase process, will also be aware that, at any moment, he or she can count on our after-sales support. In this context, running an efficient after-sales service system is almost essential. What allows us to stand out in the market is the ability to anticipate customer expectations, and for that we strive.

- What is the biggest challenge in the operation of After-Sales Service Department?

JR: Providing the adequate customer service in a timely manner. Due to the fact that we offer our customers products they use every day, any problems with them can cause discomfort. Therefore, it is important to immediately and adequately respond, to shorten the discomfort period as much as possible, and to tailor the support to a specific situation.

- What should be done to meet the challenges posed by working in After-Sales Quality?

AP: The diversity of notifications we receive is very high. However, approx. 80% of them are recurring issues. Therefore, it is important to develop uniform procedures for this type of notifications that they can be quickly and properly recognised. In addition, it is essential to filter and analyse cases that may indicate areas where it is possible to improve the quality of production and service.

JR: It is equally important to maintain the high quality of data and be able to immediately transfer them to the right place. This, in turn, allows for the provision of the highest-level services.

AP: Therefore, to support the whole process, it is important to have the right tools. In our case, we decided, this year, to replace the old IT system with the process of handling customer complaints based on the WEBCON BPS platform.

> *„We were able to improve the quality of collected data, we have a greater potential for the creation and analysis of reports tailored to current needs. This translates into a faster and more accurate response to events."*

- Typically, the introduction of a new IT solution involves the introduction of changes in the organisation, particularly in processes that are optimised. Was that in your case?

JR: Yes. First of all, thanks to this, we were able to improve the quality of collected data, and we have a greater potential for the creation and analysis of reports tailored to current needs. This, in turn, translates into a faster and more accurate response to events.

- So, how was the dealing with complaints before the implementation of CHS (Complaint Handling System) based on WEBCON BPS?

JR: Earlier, we also had an IT system that supported our work in this area. In contrast, it was created a good few years ago, and was adapted to the contemporary conditions. Meanwhile, in the last 10 years, our company has grown rapidly. The previous system was much simpler and only for 3 factories in Poland. Currently, we have 10, some abroad. That is why the decision to introduce a new solution was made. There

will be a real revolution, because the system will be unified and implemented in locations outside Poland. In the old solution, it was not possible.

- What are the values added provided by the implementation of handling customer complaints based on the BPM?

AP: Looking at the statistics, historically (before there were applied appropriate IT tools), the entire process of handling complaints (including our relationships with distributors), was sometimes up to 60 days. Today, handling complaints with distributors, at an average, is only 3.4 days, which is very measurable and satisfactory result for us. In addition, it is much easier to manage the entire process from the organisational side, when everyone knows their responsibilities and what actions he or she can and should take.

„Historically, the process of handling complaints was sometimes up to 60 days. Today, handling complaints at distributors is at an average of just 3.4 days."

JR: Also, our productivity significantly increased. We used to spend a lot of time to create reports. Currently, from each location, authorised persons will be able to automatically generate an appropriate report from the system. And thanks to getting the data faster, we are able to reduce our response time to a minimum.

- In which countries would you like to roll-out the system?

JR: In November, the system was implemented in Ukraine. Soon it will also appear in Russia, Romania and Germany which have their representative offices and departments responsible for the quality and After-Sales Service. Of course, the activity of our group goes much further, because, e.g., in the region of Scandinavia, France and England, the markets are serviced by representatives located in other countries. However, the system will collect data from the entire area of the business.

Investment in proper tools

Today, developing best practices is not enough to ensure the customer experience at the highest possible level. Support of IT tools is a must. Marcin Falkiewicz tells us about the way to ensure a system that is able to respond to business requirements in the context of After-Sales Service.

- WEBCON: The IT department was required to implement a new system to handle complaints from customers. From what did you start?

MF: Due to the fact that we previously used Microsoft SharePoint platform, and we had internal abilities to implement workflow based on it, we decided to use native capabilities of SharePoint to support CHS. However, in the course of the project, business requirements changed, resulting in a necessity to almost totally redesign the application. Another factor complicating the situation was quitting work by the programmer responsible for creating the CHS. This put the project into question, and even shattered the effort made to date.

Marcin Falkiewicz
IT Support Director

- What did happen next?

MF: We had to change the course of action and try a different approach. The Director, Krzysztof Patla, due to the experience derived from our business friend, Nowy Styl Group, suggested the use of WEBCON BPS as a tool to implement the project, and it turned out to be the right choice.

- Why did you choose this solution?

MF: First of all, its flexibility, as well as ability to modify the process and *GUI-on-the-fly*. After the market recognition, as well as thanks to the opinions gathered, i.a. from our another business friend, Barlinek, we came to the conclusion that the system will cope with the assumptions. Of course, there was also an important financial factor. We received a guarantee that WEBCON BPS can be used, without functional limitations, based on SharePoint Foundation, which allowed us to reduce costs associated with the need to purchase a license, which was particularly important to our foreign enterprises.

Equally important was the ability to transfer the maintenance of the system to key users , who could independently modify permissions, basic and vocabulary data, in a simple web environment that they know from the corporate Intranet based on SharePoint. In this way, we are able to significantly reduce the interference of IT in

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daily system administration and reduce the time needed to make simple modifications.

- How did the implementation look like?

MF: With clearly defined business objectives, and having the right tool, the project itself was realised very quickly. If I were to count all the working days we spent together with the WEBCON consultant, the entire project was done in just two weeks. Within this period, we designed whole business process framework along with subworkflows, and we developed the details during subsequent meetings.

- From your experience, how different the workflow implementation based on SharePoint's native mechanisms is in relation to the same project in WEBCON BPS?

MF: The most important difference, and also the advantage of WEBCON BPS is the time of implementation and flexibility in terms of delivered solutions. Previously, our implementation meetings consisted of discussing the business objectives, and then waiting for technological results. Due to the time required for their implementation and assumptions changing during the project lifetime, it was being performed for too long. Currently, we are able to introduce respective amendments during the implementation meeting, see their effects and decide if this is the right direction or not. Using other tools, we were forced to compromise between the iteration amount spent on the search for the best solution for a given subworkflow, and the time we are able to spent.

Time to implement even a simple workflow solution in WEBCON BPS technology, compared to the native SharePoint, is incomparably shorter. What took us a couple of days in SharePoint, we were making in WEBCON BPS in one day. For this reason, instead of talking about what we want to do, we are able to simply show the business the direction in which we are going. Thanks to this, we do not waste our valuable time on implementation of variants that could ultimately be rejected.

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- What model did you choose to implement the system based on WEBCON BPS and why?

MF: We decided to implement the agile methodology. Looking for the optimal solutions in the project is compensated by the use of sufficiently large "organisational resources" referred to the project activities, the duration of which cost quite a lot. The responsibility of a project manager, and in this case also of the solution architect is to ensure that no time is wasted unnecessarily. Please note that the experts appointed to carry out the project tasks take part in the project knowing that while

returning to their jobs, they return to their regular activities. That is why the optimum solution is to conclude subsequent phases of project works during implementation meetings, so that the people involved in the project do not have to carry out implementation tasks with their standard duties in a way of multitasking. WEBCON BPS offered the possibility.

- Do you have any plans for the wider use of the platform, outside the CHS?

MF: Definitely. We have a few ideas for new projects. One of them is almost completed, and it is a law department's contracts circulation and management system. As soon as we finish ongoing projects, we are going to proceed.

- How does, in the perspective of IT, a roll-out project for foreign companies look like?

MF: Planning roll-outs for foreign companies is primarily gaining an assurance at the stage of selecting architecture of the solution that it adequately supports the application location without much development effort. We took care of it, and made sure that this issue would not cause any problems.

„Currently, we are able to introduce respective amendments during the implementation meeting, see their effects and decide if this is the right direction."

Of course, a certain amount of configuration work is necessary, e.g. in introduction of translation of both the application and basic or vocabulary data in appropriate languages, but that is all we have to do. Estimating WEBCON BPS as an appropriate technology for this purpose, we cannot ignore the aspect of easiness and integration with external data sources, in our case, the corporate data warehouse, from which the CHS gets, among others, central database of all customers and products, and with various ERP and B2B.

Picking the low-hanging fruit

Krzysztof Patla tells us about the essence of the work of recently employed IT Director, how to reach for the "low hanging fruits" and how to successfully carry out IT projects.

- You will be employed by a new organisation as the IT Director. What are your new challenges?

KP: The main challenge, and this applies to all new employees, is to quickly find my own fitness company. Therefore, in the first months of work, it is extremely important that the IT Director finds and identifies "low-hanging fruits" - technological challenges or problems that the organisation has been facing for a long time, and which are relatively easy to solve.

- Was this accomplished?

Krzysztof Patla
IT Director

KP: For me, the "low hanging fruit" in Rovese was a project of optimisation the After-Sales Service, which, after a year of work was a big question mark. That is why I suggested to change the concept of building an application from scratch based on Microsoft SharePoint, in favour of a solution that offers the ability to quickly create business applications without the need of a new code. In this case, the choice fell on WEBCON BPS, which is used in my previous employer, and after further evaluation, we were convinced about it capabilities.

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The decision proved to be a hit, because it allowed us to provide ready and desirable results, disproportionately faster compared to the previous project.

- Was it difficult to convince business to invest in a new solution?

KP: My role was limited only to inspire Marcin, and he did the rest. On the other hand, I think the project team understood the advantages and potential of the solution, especially in terms of speed of the results' delivery, as well as the ability to shape the processes according to our own preferences. In the context of the previous project lasting a year, we were able to conclude this one within two months, including any required decisions.

- So, what are the greatest differences in creating a workflow based on the native mechanisms of Microsoft SharePoint compared to other BPM systems which only are based on SharePoint?

KP: The differences are not as diametrical as it might seem. The essence of the issue lies in the fact that the development based on SharePoint requires extensive development abilities. Unfortunately, as we know, creating such abilities is not a simple task, primarily because of the necessary time.

In this context, the use of ready tools provides, in many cases, the technological safety and the ability to deliver functional solutions with less effort.

- What are, in your opinion, the key factors in the implementation of IT projects for workflows and business process management?

KP: The key factor is an appropriate modelling of the process and ensuring that, at the end of the path of its implementation in the IT technology, it will not undergo a substantive change. In a well-described organisation with well-arranged processes, an implementation of a BPM system is, very simply, a formality. In cases where it is not, or we have to deal with an implementation of a new process, a good practice is to take enough time to describe it – but be warned – only in terms of its basic course. Delving into the details of each sub-process is a common mistake, delaying the project.

„In the context of the previous project lasting a year, we were able to conclude this one within two months, including any required decisions."

Also, the participants of the process have to become aware that the process will be "flowing". This means a change in their work because BPM tools provide control over the various stages of implementation of activities, which greatly accelerates the business processes, enforcing, at the same time, the necessity of regularity in the activities. Knowing that each step of the process can be shown on the timeline and be optimised raises concerns. It is a good motivation.

- To what the special attention should be paid in the daily work of IT?

KP: It is important to create a Research&Development culture, which involves the addition, to resolving the current problems, a view of what is happening around and what solutions are needed to grow the business. What is desirable here is the ability to distance oneself from current issues, as well as the ability to review the market and analyse implemented solutions.

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