



Digital transformation at Huhtamaki

Huhtamaki is a global leader and expert in the production of food packaging. The organization has over 100 years of tradition and currently operates in 36 countries, with 81 production plants around the world. The company employs more than 18,000 people worldwide.

Huhtamaki serves global and local food service operators with the highest quality food packaging products. The organization strongly focuses on innovations in the area of production, materials used, and the process of product development and prototyping .

The implementation of WEBCON BPS took place in Huhtamaki FS Poland, a Polish division of Huhtamaki.

About Huhtamaki:

Industry:
Production

Website:
[huhtamaki.com](https://www.huhtamaki.com)

Implementation region:
Europe

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AT HUHTAMAKI

Digitization of business processes in Huhtamaki

Digitizing business processes is not a new concept for Huhtamaki. After a multi-year period spent building and maintaining business applications with Lotus Notes, Huhtamaki went looking to change the platform. After evaluating many available platforms via a multi-stage selection process that included building test applications, Huhtamaki chose WEBCON BPS.

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The gradual phasing out of Lotus Notes began – much like many companies deciding to take this step - with the migration of e-mail to Microsoft Exchange. That was followed by an attempt to find a new home for the business applications they'd built and developed over the years. Unfortunately, this was revealed to be such a complex endeavor that it effectively required rebuilding their Notes applications from scratch.

Given that Huhtamaki's Lotus Notes environment required a large amount of time for daily maintenance and the emergence of various performance problems, the IT team decided to evaluate the available alternatives. The fact that decision to migrate was being repeatedly postponed made time available to test alternative platforms in the best possible way – using them to rebuild one of the applications they wanted to transfer.



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After Lotus Notes, what's next?

The first platform the IT team evaluated was the Microsoft SharePoint together with Microsoft PowerApps.

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After years of creating and, above all, maintaining applications built in Lotus Notes, we knew what aspects to pay attention to. It quickly turned out that the Microsoft offering could not meet our functional requirements; the scenarios we wanted to support required coding, which we wanted to avoid, primarily due to the costs of maintenance and future development. If, having purchased a low-code platform, we found that we needed to code anyway, we would have even started considering just writing our own portal.

Marek Rusecki,

IT specialist at Huhtamaki FS Poland
responsible for the process of selecting, implementing and maintaining the platform.

Another reason the Microsoft PowerApps platform was rejected was that some of the applications they intended to rebuild on the new platform were to be closely integrated with the ERP system operating in Huhtamaki's local data centers. Despite the technical possibility of connecting the Microsoft cloud-hosted platform with the resources of the internal network, such a scenario was quickly rejected.

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The applications we wanted to build exchange data with the ERP system in real time. From our point of view, the overhead related to the use of a cloud-based platform was unnecessary and unreasonable. We decided to expand the circle of research.

Marek Rusecki,

IT specialist at Huhtamaki FS Poland

The number of low-code solutions available on the market today is overwhelmingly large. Huhtamaki decided to consult actual users of this type of tools and managed to narrow down the list of potential suppliers to two companies: an open-source solution and a commercial solution, namely WEBCON BPS. The same application was created in both tools, responding to Huhtamaki's actual needs.

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When testing a solution, you pay attention to many different elements, but the first impression is important. The final assessment is strongly influenced by how the environment is arranged and how easy – or difficult – it is to understand the logic of the application building process. Both platforms were nice, and we liked both of them. However, comparing the time needed to build an application clearly turned the scales in favor of WEBCON. In the end, what led us to decide on WEBCON BPS was InstantChange™.

Marek Rusecki,
IT specialist at Huhtamaki FS Poland

InstantChange™ technology is a unique WEBCON feature made possible thanks to the platform's state-of-the-art workflow engine. It allows changes to be made to applications in real time – including existing and running workflow instances. Thanks to InstantChange™, application development process can be carried out in an agile, iterative way and in close cooperation with end users; introducing any number of changes after the application's production launch is fast and low-cost.

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While building the pilot application, we felt that the way WEBCON BPS approaches change management would greatly simplify our lives, facilitate the introduction of corrections, and speed up the response to change requests from end users.

Marek Rusecki,
IT specialist at Huhtamaki FS Poland

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A catalyst for change

In 2018, the Huhtamaki group central decision was made to limit the use of Lotus. In practice, this meant that further use of the solution would be associated with additional, high costs. This information was a catalyst for change, and the IT department offered the management board a plan to implement the new platform.

Further solutions were created at the rate of up to five applications a week.

A condition for purchasing a platform license was a pilot launch of three applications selected by the management board. Just two weeks later, they were ready, and Huhtamaki switched from the no-charge WEBCON BPS Express edition to the paid Enterprise edition. Further solutions were created at the rate of up to five applications a week.



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Creation and development are one and the same thing

Knowing that making changes - even in production applications - is simple, fast, and low-cost has changed the way Huhtamaki digitizes business processes today. In accordance with the tenets of the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) methodology, initial simple solutions are created to meet the most important requirements of users; they're then launched in production and iteratively expanded with further automation, simplifications, and capabilities.

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Business users are most impressed by the fact that we run the applications in batches. For example, the complaint handling process started as a simple form where all fields were simple text boxes into which the user entered information manually. Launching the application at this stage made it possible to immediately start collecting data from the process and monitor its proper course. A week later, based on the analysis of how users actually work with the solution, we added support for selecting the goods related to a complaint from a list populated directly from the ERP system. The following week, we added the ability to select the order to which the complaint applies from data retrieved from the ERP system -- filtered to orders that contain the previously-selected product. Thanks to this approach, we focus only on providing functionalities that are actually needed and we can easily change the priorities of our applications development.

Marek Rusecki,
IT specialist at Huhtamaki FS Poland

The current version of the application that supports complaint notifications allows you to enter an SKU code identifying the product concerned, and almost the entire complaint form is filled automatically. Thanks to the integration with the ERP system, a user handling a complaint about a product can immediately see which raw materials it was made from – and optionally block their availability to be used at the warehouse with a single click. It speeds up the handling of the customer’s complaint – and reduces the chance of similar complaints.

Thanks to this approach, we focus only on providing functionalities that are actually needed and we can easily change the priorities of our applications development.



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What applications to create on the low-code platform?

Huhtamaki uses their low-code platform to rapidly build business applications, especially for processes that are important but not yet supported in their standard line of business (ERP, WMS, CRM) systems of record. Examples range from vacation and business travel requests to an integrated approach to approving purchase requests, to contracts, to accepting cost invoices, to company-specific processes like production forecasting.

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Thanks to the application, traders can easily forecast the product group sales levels for a given period of time. It helps a lot when planning factory production capacity and raw material purchasing. And sales representatives get up-to-date reports on things like current product sales while viewing/editing forecast forms. We submit this reported data as production orders to BPCS (Business Planning and Control System); that's our ERP system, which operates on the IBM iSeries AS400 platform. Our planning departments make great use of this information.

Marek Rusecki,

IT specialist at Huhtamaki FS Poland

The new substance registration workflow is another good example of an application developed using WEBCON BPS. It's used, for example, when starting to use a new cleaning agent. The process starts by completing a form with details about the registered substance. Then the OHS department verifies that it complies with safety standards. Then the purchasing department validates its availability. In the case that the agent is a hazardous substance, the process requires additional reviews/approvals. The application ensures that the process runs smoothly, and not just the approval process; that newly-approved cleaning agent's information card automatically becomes available to all interested parties, who are notified of its availability. The entire set of processes is auditable.

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The premise of digitizing processes in Huhtamaki was to eliminate unproductive running around with sheets of paper around the office. Thanks to the applications developed with WEBCON BPS, the pandemic-necessitated switch to remote work wasn't particularly difficult for us.

Marek Rusecki,
IT specialist at Huhtamaki FS Poland

IT builds applications ranging from simple to complex, involving anything from a few steps to several dozen. Their importance for the company also varies a lot. Many of the applications are directly integrated with ERP and CRM systems, allowing users to use centrally-maintained data sources like lists of products, orders, warehouse documents, contractors, or suppliers. Some of that information is fetched in real time, whereas other information is cached by WEBCON BPS and updated on a schedule.



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Maintaining dozens of applications

Delivering more than a dozen applications per year requires resources for maintenance and ongoing development. Huhtamaki was able to keep those resource requirements low thanks to WEBCON BPS.

Its InstantChange™ technology automatically updates any changes between development and production environments, and it produces automatically-generated documentation updates. This made both planned development and reactive responses to ongoing change requests a lot easier – and a lot less expensive.

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The Lotus Notes environment involved a smaller number of applications than we have at present, but it required us to spend about three person-days per week just to monitor the platform's behavior and respond to emerging problems like document locks or agent failures. We basically don't need to monitor the WEBCON environment. Ongoing maintenance takes one hour per week, which is about 20 times less time than what we needed to maintain Lotus Notes. Issues reported by users have turned out to be most often a matter of user error – for example, accidentally ending a workflow. Thanks to InstantChange™, we can resolve such cases immediately.

Marek Rusecki,

IT specialist at Huhtamaki FS Poland

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Similarities and differences

Despite the obvious technological differences, WEBCON BPS is similar in idea to Lotus Notes - the logic of the application development is the same, and the events processed in the system take the form of documents related to - even one-step - workflow. An activity history record is also created automatically.

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The things important to our users who switched from Lotus include automatic form completion based on external data, the immediate data export to Excel, and automatic reports on the time spent by the workflow on individual steps. Plus, each document offers a history view that shows who changed what, the resulting bursts of activity, and how long each one took. From my point of view, the most important thing is that everything that happens in the platform is reflected in the SQL Server database. It gives me full access to application data.

Marek Rusecki,
IT specialist at Huhtamaki FS Poland



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Challenges on the horizon

In three years, Huhtamaki rebuilt or added more than 50 solutions – and more are planned. They’ve achieved so much business value from this effort that they’re planning to provide the platform to another Huhtamaki factory and expand the IT team. They’re also considering a change to the ERP system as well.

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Thanks to the decision to build solutions on WEBCON BPS, changing the ERP system will be easier. The implementation of the new system will focus on the correct configuration of standard functionality. Anything over and above that standard is something we already have or built in WEBCON BPS that simply integrates with our ERP – and any other ERP. This will save time, nerves, and money.

Marek Rusecki,
IT specialist at Huhtamaki FS Poland



ABOUT WEBCON BPS

WEBCON produces the WEBCON BPS platform - a comprehensive low-code solution for digitization, automation, and management of business processes.

Process solutions built with **WEBCON BPS** help companies work more efficiently, make better business decisions, and generate time and cost savings. The platform encourages organizations to continually optimize their processes, automate repetitive tasks, and get rid of paper – effectively

using IT technologies to support existing and implement new business models. These kinds of process automation and digitization tend to introduce a new level of quality into companies' operations and business management.

WEBCON's customers estimate that **WEBCON BPS** is able to address over 90% of their business needs and scenarios with a single platform; it fits needs ranging from simple activities supporting operations to complex processes critical to business continuity.

WEBCON BPS has already been chosen by over 650 companies and corporations around the world.



Learn how we can help your company leverage digital transformation!

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