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LOQUTUS FACILITATES INTEGRATION AT M-TEAM BY INTRODUCING A CENTRALLY MANAGED PLATFORM

IMPLEMENTATION OF ESB-SOLUTION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF COMPETENCE CENTRE ARE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE APPROACH

IT-service provider M-Team is the informatics partner for independent and neutral health insurance funds. Its teams of analysts, developers, project leaders and network/system engineers ensure the optimal electronic processing of the repayment of healthcare proceeds. M-Team is dedicated to guaranteeing reliable and safe access to IT applications for its users. This also requires rapid response to changes in legislation.

Wim Savonet, team coordinator at M-Team, explains, "Like in many organisations, we have seen a proliferation of applications within M-Team. Different departments work with a variety of technologies and platforms, each comprising its own island. The need for a centrally managed platform became increasingly imperative. But the more technologies and applications, the more complex the integration becomes. To us, the solution was the implementation of an Enterprise Service Bus (ESB) and, more specifically, the IBM Integration Bus (IIB)." And this is where LoQutus brought value.

AN INTEGRATION PARTNER WITH EXPERTISE

An ESB integration of this scope requires the creation of a reference structure and the development of guidelines. It involves relatively new technology and, as an integration expert, LoQutus already had valuable experience with similar projects. That made the choice of LoQutus as M-Team's partner for this critical project an easy decision.

Niek Jacobsen, Senior IIB developer & architect at LoQutus, adds, "The aim was to establish an infrastructure that ensured every project and every problem within M-Team would be approached in the same way. The first part of our mission was to provide the reference structure and establish standards, followed by the actual implementation of the technology."

To ensure smooth deployment and an ongoing evolution of the platform, M-Team also decided to establish a competence centre, consisting of people experienced in ESB. These resources would be available to anyone within the organisation who needs integration advice and support.

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Wim Savonet
Team Coordinator,
M-Team

PROBLEM

M-Team wanted to move from a multitude of applications to a centrally managed platform.

SOLUTION

LoQutus implemented an ESB-solution based on IIB and supervises integration projects from within an internal competence centre on an ongoing basis.



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Kortrijksesteenweg 1146
B-9051 Sint-Denijs-Westrem
www.loqutus.com



ESB COMPETENCE CENTRE AS COACH

Initially, the ESB Competence Centre (ECC) consisted of one LoQutus employee who trained M-Team employees that would ultimately staff the centre. The ECC centralised the firm's IIB knowledge and organised training sessions for employees. While the implementation of applications is always undertaken by an M-Team employee who is not part of the ECC, ECC members are available in an essential coaching role that ensures smooth and effective implementation.

Savonet reports, "Within M-Team, we see ECC as a fully-fledged long-term project, of which I am Project Manager. That being said, it soon became clear to us that LoQutus' role was not yet completed. We needed the expertise of their consultants to continue guiding and supporting us as we roll out additional projects in the coming years." Today, the competence centre team consists of two people from M-Team – an architect and an ESB-developer – along with three LoQutus' employees and an external team leader.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

The first challenge was convincing the M-Team management of the need for an ESB solution and a competence centre, especially with regard to the return on required investments for both purchasing the product and training of the users. The smooth course of the first projects, however, quickly assured the management that it was a good decision for the future of the organisation.

The next challenge was convincing employees of the benefits this way of working would bring. "Point-to-Point was strongly embedded in our earlier way of working, but that had to change," Savonet explains. "As you might expect, our people were initially somewhat resistant to the changes required. For them, the need for a centrally managed platform was less evident. But this is where the ECC demonstrated its usefulness in training employees and getting them on board with the new way of working: the team developed guidelines and best practices, supervised implementation projects, and more."

Meanwhile, everyone within M-Team has recognised the added value that the project brings. "Sometimes, we still are lacking the right mindset in certain areas," Savonet adds. "But eventually, we believe everyone in the organisation will be fully on board. The integration of customer services will form an important next step for the organisation."

SATISFIED RESPONSES

Overall, the M-Team staff has responded well to the new ESB solution and to the ECC and its supportive role. When a problem occurs, LoQutus is often already aware of the cause and can quickly offer efficient solutions. The ECC ensures very high added value within the project: training employees and overseeing project implementation are critical to the success of implementations of this nature. The consensus was that the implementation would have run much less smoothly if an external team had been used.

For M-Team's customers, the health insurance funds, turnaround times have become considerably shorter and there is more capacity for maintenance and support of various services. Maintenance costs have also decreased significantly, with everything running much more smoothly thanks to the transparency these new applications deliver.

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Niek Jacobsen
Senior IIB developer & architect,
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