



## AWW customers helped quickly and efficiently, cost-to-serve falls dramatically.



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In 2004 the drinking water producer AWW decided to change over to a process-driven method of working to further improve its internal operations and services. To achieve this, integrated IT support is an absolute must.

In consultation with IT partner Itineris, it was decided to implement Microsoft Dynamics AX, chiefly because of its flexibility. A strict project policy had already brought about the integration of the customer contact centre with the rest of the operational management and the implementation of the Itineris Utilities Solution including Xellent, an invoicing module for utility companies.

Now there is a single access point through which the help-desk staff have an overview of the status of a customer, allowing them to answer any questions straightaway. Integration with the Internet will further speed up electronic invoicing and allow direct control of the data. One of the main benefits of this integrated method of working is the higher quality of data, which directly serves the core objective of a service company such as AWW.

## Summary

Country: België

Sector: Drinking water producer

## Profile

AWW is one of the biggest drinking water producers in the Benelux. Each year the company produces and delivers more than 150 billion litres. Of this 72% goes to residents and industry in the Antwerp region and 28% to other Flemish drinking water companies.

## Challenge

AWW wanted to change over to a process-driven method of working, with integration of all the IT systems of the different departments. The end goal was to better serve the customers.

## Solution

Microsoft Dynamics AX, supplemented with the Itineris Utilities Solution and Xellent invoicing solution, improves customer service.

## Advantages

- A single access point for staff
- Integration with the Internet
- More control possibilities
- Higher quality of data
- Mobility and laptops increase the effectiveness of mobile staff
- Increased customer service

**E**ven though it had a lot of customised work and was supplemented with ReMax accounting software, the AS/400 was just no longer good enough for a modern utility company such as AWW. In particular, there was a lack of integration between the different applications. For example, having to manually input the aggregated data of 50,000 invoices each month (600,000 invoices a year) into the accounts could no longer be justified.

In 2004 AWW decided to switch over to a process-driven way of working to further improve its internal operations and services, which meant that the IT support also had to be integrated. The option of an automation package came to the fore. This would be responsible for the integration between the systems of the various departments, accessible through a single user-friendly interface. GIS, stock management, work planning and the customer contact centre would also be integrated. In order to stimulate the mobility and flexibility of the staff, the programme also included the purchase of pocket PCs and laptops.

## Atlas supports the processes

The resolution to improve the operational management led to a major project, which first had an impact mainly on the Marketing and Sales department, Logistics and accounting. But it will also support the operations of the purchasing service, warehouses and personnel department. This major project, called Atlas, was partly managed by Koen Meersschaert in Marketing and Sales. "Atlas fully fits in with our mission and strategy. We want to offer total solutions for the delivery and treatment of water. For this, socially responsible and sustainable ventures with a balance between economic and social interests are very important. These objectives are aided by developing a process-driven organisation with specially adapted and integrated ICT support," says Koen Meersschaert, coordinator of Marketing and Sales at AWW.

## 20,000 invoices a night

To implement the Atlas project in Marketing and Sales, they called in IT partner Itineris, which specialises in the business automation of utility companies. During the selection process Itineris put forward its solution specifically for utilities, which is based on Microsoft Dynamics AX. "This software package was commended for its flexibility in a study and for us this is very important," says Koen Meersschaert. "In particular, in order to keep up with the numerous legal amendments with ease it's essential for AWW to opt for a real utility solution with a proven track record." All the staff at the customer contact centre have

to be able to work on the system at the same time.

Dynamics AX was supplemented with the Itineris Utilities Solution and the Xellent invoicing module distributed by Itineris. The software processes up to 20,000 invoices a night in just three hours, of which two-thirds are advance payments and one-third consumption and statement bills. This is enough for AWW but the system can do more if necessary. The software allows automatic checks, gives orders for the payment of negative balances, automatically generates lists of bad payers, can invoice on the basis of volume instead of fixed periods and is flexible with regard to price adjustments or changes in the law.

### Fewer cries for help

This new method of working also aims to dramatically reduce the number of calls to the customer contact centre. The Internet especially is playing a prominent role in this, for example with the registration of a water reading. An instant check ensures that apparent mistakes are corrected immediately. The system makes the invoice straightaway and shows it to the customer, who also has the option to pay right then through the Internet. Take-overs of contracts and the management of personal data are also taken care of in this way.

The help-desk staff find the system very easy to work with as they can get all the information through one access point. They can consult all the customer data through a unique customer number as well as carry out searches based on other criteria, such as the meter number or supply address. Thanks to a well-organised user interface and direct access to the applications of the different AWW departments, they can answer customers' questions much more easily. After all, the system gives them a "total customer overview": they have an insight into exceptional situations such as abnormally low water pressures and supplies that have been cut off due to non-payment or outstanding bills. The system automatically highlights points of special interest with a dot. This method of working allows the help-desk staff to give customers as much information as possible, so that customers don't have to call back and the number of calls is reduced.

In 2007 mobile personnel will receive a PDA or a laptop. So additional data, which are difficult to predict, can then be remotely entered in an instant. It will also be possible for direct dispatching from the head office to the technicians on the job. What is also handy is that the system can link separate notes to certain data. In this way incoming and outgoing communication is stored in the right context.



**“By being so intensively involved with our partner on this project, we are creating a documented system that can offer simple first-line aid. There’s no sense in depending on a third party for every little thing,**

**Koen Meersschaert,**  
coördinator Marketing & Sales of AWW

### Data quality improves

An automation package improves the quality of the data inputted. For project manager Koen Meersschaert, it was especially important for the system to be sufficiently unambiguous. Confusing one customer for another is completely unacceptable. The use of the National Registry Number means that two different people with the same name can no longer be mixed up. We also have the option of using different communication channels, such as e-mail, fax, scanned documents, outgoing correspondence or wireless systems.”

The project is being completed in smaller modules. “In this way we maintain an overview. So every six weeks AWW can evaluate the project together with us and adjust it if necessary,” says Edgard Vermeersch, managing director of the implementation partner Itineris. “The basis of our project methodology is Rational Unified Process. RUP is the guiding principle for the project, from setting the scope to fine-tuning. It focuses on what the actual interests of the company are and then gears priorities towards them. This approach allows AWW and Itineris to steer the project flexibly in line with the business strategy.”

### Its own first-line aid

To keep the project on track AWW is working with a group of key users, including people who are not really computer-minded. They ensure that the project remains acceptable to everyone. “By being so intensively involved

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with our partner on this project, we are creating a documented system that can offer simple first-line aid. There's no sense in depending on a third party for every little thing," says Koen Meersschaert. "Anyway we really appreciate the fact that Itineris found the ideal balance between price, quality and budget."

The high quality of the project was illustrated by the negligible errors during the data conversion. The enormous amount of data from all 150,000 customers (master data, history, orders, services, etc...) was converted. Thanks to Itineris's iterative approach to the project, AWW suc-

**Itineris's approach to the project, its specific expertise and experience of the characteristic traits of the utilities market turned out to be key elements in the successful implementation of such a complex utility project.**

**Hendrik Seuntjens, manager of AWW**

ceeded in limiting the errors to just 22 customer-related data, with the reason being known. Without a doubt this was a unique performance. Shortly after the start-up of the application it is still too early to fully verify the benefits of Axapta. "What we can say with certainty is that the quality of our data has improved and that the processing of this data happens faster. Whereas Coda files previously used to be processed in 24 hours, this now happens in four hours."