codit
integrating your business

ZESPRI

ZESPRI WINS EFFICIENCY, COST SAVINGS AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION THROUGH E-INVOICING

The customer

ZESPRI is organised in a rather distinctive way. The group is owned by 2,700 New Zealand kiwi farmers who take care of the cultivation of ZESPRI Kiwis - wholly in line with the quality system. Two subsidiaries - amongst which ZESPRI Europe - handle the sales and marketing in Europe. In addition to the head office in Belgium, ZESPRI Europe has an extensive network of local sales and marketing specialists in the main European countries. ZESPRI Kiwis arrive at four European ports: Zeebrugge (Belgium), Tarragona and Marin (Spain) and Porto Vado (Italy). In 2011/2012 ZESPRI had a global kiwifruit sales of $1.62 billion and reported the purchase of 55,4 million trays of ZESPRI Kiwifruit in Europe and Middle East.

The challenge

To honor the gentlemen's agreement with one of its customers, ZESPRI Europe was on the outlook for an e-invoicing solution. They decided to start small and learn but at the same time, they wanted to invest only in a solution that was future proof. It had to be a framework that would be able to grow and allow connecting more and more customers over time. Stringent conditions applied such as meeting all legal requirements with regard to e-invoicing, being able to adapt to regulatory changes and providing ultimate security.

The solution

Codit has implemented an online platform based on Microsoft Windows Azure, called Codit Integration Cloud. Designed to set up connections and integrations quickly and most efficiently, it provides a reliable and transparent cloud environment supremely suited for e-invoicing scenarios. Codit Integration Cloud comprises Managed Services, offering "Integration as a Service" in which Codit fully takes care of implementing, hosting, running and supporting the ZESPRI processes.
The implementation of this online integration solution could be accomplished easily and in the shortest time frame of only a couple of days.

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An interview with Raj Kant, Information Systems Manager and François Caudron, Business Analyst with ZESPRI Europe, revealed why ZESPRI opted for Codit Integration Cloud, what the impact of the project was within the company, what benefits the new e-invoicing solution brings and how they experienced working with Codit. Before contacting candidate suppliers, their team made an extensive cost-benefit analysis to determine whether or not moving towards e-invoicing would be a smart move for the company. It quickly appeared that on the long term, a fully automated invoicing process would be the most cost effective way to go.

Decision criteria

Since no technology decision was made upfront, all doors remained open for any technology that would be able to efficiently connect with an SAP environment. Yet the solution had to be fully regulatory compliant as no in-house experience or knowledge was immediately available amongst the ZESPRI team. Another major requirement was the agility of the solution: it had to be future proof.

"Future proof on two levels", adds Raj Kant. "We started with the integration of only one customer to the e-invoicing platform but it is definitely our intention to connect much more customers. The solution we were looking for had to provide that option without bringing along rework. Besides, we appreciate that the e-invoicing legislation will definitely change over the years to come. I wanted a solution that could easily adapt to regulatory changes."

Why ZESPRI Europe opted for Codit Integration Cloud

Besides meeting the customer's requirements, the online integration platform Codit Integration Cloud is a business-oriented and user-friendly platform. Choosing for it was a double win, as the integration experience Codit owns, is fully available in the platform 'as a service'.

"From previous encounters with Codit we knew that we would be dealing with a partner who is very knowledgeable. Codit Integration Cloud has been designed by Codit and includes their massive amount of expertise. To make the solution suited for e-invoicing, Codit had invested in research and obtained legal advice" says Raj.

Advantages

- Legal compliancy with regard to e-invoicing

- Increased efficiency of the invoicing process and reduction of errors

- Cost savings by automating manual processing of invoices

- No investments upfront – ZESPRI only pays for what they use

- No concerns about platform operations

- Future-proof solution that can grow with the company and easily adapt to new regulations

- Detailed and integrated reporting via the cloud

- Higher customer satisfaction by providing a stronger services offering towards (new) customers and by meeting expectations

About the implementation phase

After an on-site briefing at ZESPRI's premises, Codit took over the project management and started to connect Codit Integration Cloud with the SAP environment offsite, based upon ZESPRI's analysis. Overall, the total implementation effort took no more than three days. For ZESPRI, the project ran very smooth. François Caudron confirms: "From a project management point of view, Codit was really taking the lead. For us it actually was a very simple project. No technical issues, no pains."

Sam Vanhoutte, Codit's Chief Technology Officer and Product Manager adds: "Together with ZESPRI, we defined the actual mapping. From then on, we implemented the process and communicated and tested directly with ZESPRI's end customer."

The importance of the project for ZESPRI

The implementation of an e-invoicing solution appeared to be a key project within the organization. Raj Kant explains: "We needed to do this first e-invoicing scenario to perfection, because of our intention to roll out the platform to all of our customers. Also, we have an on premises integration solution running on Microsoft BizTalk and this in-house solution had to integrate with the Codit Integration Cloud. It all had to be right from the very first moment on; and it was."

Benefits of the e-invoicing solutions – on team and corporate level

ZESPRI recognizes various different benefits to the e-invoicing solution, on different levels. François explains: "Firstly, the IT team can fully rely on the technical support provided by Codit Managed Services that is included in the cloud package. We know we are safe in that regard. Secondly, as a company, we have a much stronger competitive position, as we are now capable to offer our customer yet another extra service option. We now know we can meet customer expectations with regard to e-invoicing and deliver the info exactly as desired.
Thirdly we even have a happy finance team as they are released from a huge amount of paper work and the manual processing of paper invoices. Moreover, the project had minimal impact on their organization, yet they now enjoy maximal result: less document handling, no more lost invoices, reduced billing errors, faster payments... And last but not least, we can easily visualize invoices securely online."

Codit Integration Cloud comes with Managed Services

Codit Integration Cloud includes Managed Services, which basically means that customers no longer have to worry about servers, monitoring, alerts, infrastructure or management of the solution. Danny Buysse, Lead architect and Managed Services Manager explains: "As an example, one of the things we do, is proactively monitor the platform and immediately report any non-standard business activity." Codit takes care of implementing, hosting, running and supporting the processes, while the customer can maintain full technical and functional visibility into flows through various monitoring and notification tools.

fltr: Raj Kant - Information Systems Manager, François Caudron - Business Analyst, Jacqueline Hendriks - Finance Manager at ZESPRI Europe

What ZESPRI says about working with Codit

"Codit is a fantastic team, very knowledgeable and flexible. They take full ownership of the project to ensure delivery, without delays and with continued full support. Regardless the hour of day, the team ensures a full and smooth transition! Codit's approach brings structure and efficiency to a project of this nature" says François. "We particularly appreciate the no-nonsense approach of Sam Vanhoutte, project lead, and the commitment of the Managed Services team paying attention to the smallest details and always thinking three steps ahead."
"If anyone would ask me what I would say when they ask my opinion about working with Codit, no doubts my answer would be: don't think twice, just do it!" confirms Raj Kant. He further adds, "This is ZESPRI EUROPE'S first cloud based solution, and a very successful one too!"

Recommendations to companies considering moving to e-invoicing

For starting an e-invoicing project, Raj stresses on the importance of a good preparation. "It is really important to fully understand and document the business side of the project. It is key to understand the whole scenario of the e-invoicing system and to have different types of invoices available for testing. Besides that, select the right partner for your company. If you want a good night's sleep, Codit is an excellent choice!"

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