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BRUSSELS AIRLINES

IT INTEGRATION AND API MANAGEMENT: CATALYSTS FOR EFFICIENT OPERATIONS AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AT BRUSSELS AIRLINES

Brussels Airlines, carrying almost 8 million passengers a year, implemented a new passenger service system (PSS) – one of the most important IT systems for an airline carrier – in January 2016. Codit used Microsoft BizTalk Server to integrate the new PSS with the other applications it shares information with, and Sentinet for the central management of application programming interfaces (APIs).

The challenge: to achieve maximum benefits from the new central passenger system

Reservations, check-in, ticketing, flight departures and stock management: all these aspects are managed efficiently within the passenger system (PSS). Brussels Airlines had been using its previous system for over ten years, but strategic changes meant it was time for something new. For all operations to run smoothly, it's crucial that the new PSS system shares information with other applications; Brussels Airlines therefore went in search of a partner to take care of the integration.

"It's not always easy for a CIO to discuss integration software with other members of the management board as it gets too technical," says Simon Lamkin, Chief Information Officer (CIO) at Brussels Airlines. "But they could see that we needed a good integration platform for the new PSS to work as efficient as possible. Without connecting it to the other applications, we couldn't guarantee that we were able to use it successfully."

Brussels Airlines has been using Microsoft technology for many years, so Microsoft BizTalk Server was a logical choice for the integration – and the "best fit for purpose" in Brussels Airlines' IT landscape, according to various analyses. The airline went in search of a Microsoft Certified Partner in 2014. "We compared five BizTalk Server certified partners Microsoft suggested to us," says Simon Lamkin. "Codit was the right fit for us. They understood straight away how important this integration solution was for us and our customers, and they had the right expertise, skills, experience and attitude. There was an immediate click between the two parties. We want our suppliers to act as partners who help us look for solutions and suggest better alternatives by their own initiative. Codit satisfies all these requirements."

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"Integration is central to our digital transformation"

Simon Lamkin
CIO at Brussels Airlines

The solution: future-proof integration

In January 2015 Codit started integrating the new PSS with all the applications it needs to share information with. The integration ensures that all Brussels Airlines systems, employees and customers get the information they need, whether it's for planning flights, arranging crew or handling complaints, improving customer satisfaction is a priority for Brussels Airlines, and integration glues all the applications together. What's more, the flexible BizTalk middleware layer, which ensures the applications are 'loosely coupled' (so independently connected to each other), means Brussels Airlines' IT is ready for the future.

"BizTalk Server is the central, robust, secure integration platform where we manage connections between the various systems centrally," explains Simon Lamkin. "It means there's no need for point-to-point integrations, which are more difficult to manage, and it gives us a clearly documented overview of all the integrations between the applications. This wasn't the case before. The infrastructure we used to have, typically with point-to-point integrations, was very complex. There was little overview and limited knowledge about the connections that were in place, which was of course a risk."

After ten months' integration work, Brussels Airlines was able to switch to the new passenger system in January 2016 without any problems. "Thanks to the good collaboration between my team and Codit, we had a seamless migration," explains Simon Lamkin. "We had the right project management discipline, with weekly consultations to discuss progress and daily updates when necessary. Codit always understood our requirements very quickly."

Benefits

- "We're working much more efficiently thanks to the various system integrations. If something goes wrong, we now know exactly what the integration situation looks like so we can resolve any problems quickly."

- "BizTalk Server is financially beneficial because you use it to manage all the integrations, which reduces the cost. It's a technology that's definitely proven its worth. You get a consistent and complete set of IT systems with no surprises or unnecessary complexity."

API Management for secure and controlled real-time information

Brussels Airlines' IT systems make frequent use of APIs. These are used by internal and external systems to make specific functionality available to other applications. The API Management layer exposes this functionality in a secure and controlled way, using a pre-defined interface. Brussels Airlines doesn't use point-to-point connections to integrate their systems, but instead uses an API Management platform to manage all APIs centrally. This management platform includes security, monitoring, tracing, version management and analysis.

The API Management layer also ensures that the API response time meets the requirements in Brussels Airlines' SLA. These SLAs are very important considering that the APIs are typically used to look up real-time information such as e.g. baggage information, flights and delays, loyalty programmes or information for other systems such as on-board catering or group rate calculations.

Brussels Airlines opted for the Sentinet API Management layer from Nevatech. This central management platform guarantees high availability and has a user-friendly user interface (UI) for managing APIs. Codit has been a Nevatech partner for many years and already supervised various successful Sentinet implementations.

IT is key to digital transformation

"Codit has accelerated Brussels Airlines' digital transformation," says CIO Simon Lamkin. "It's much easier to manage and adapt applications now, which is essential for Brussels Airlines to be able to adapt and modernise quickly to strengthen its position in this very competitive sector."

"Thanks to the integration and APIs, we can keep our customers and crew better informed if there's a delay, for example, and explain the reason behind it and how long it will last. Customers are able to look up this information in an app on their smartphone too. The fast data transfer between the systems gives you the same accurate information via every channel wherever you are. We want to offer our customers a better experience and have now proven that it's possible to do this quickly and easily. Integration means we can make maximum use of all systems, and API Management allows us to use various pieces of functionality in a controlled and secure way. This deeply embedded integration is central to our digital transformation."

The collaboration continues

Ongoing integration project

"We will continue to work with Codit. Integration projects tend to come up regularly and Codit is still developing more interfaces for us. The infrastructure is designed in such a way that further integrations are always possible, and Codit is going to help us migrate to BizTalk Server 2016; this new version will offer us even more improvements in terms of expansion, availability and speed."

Managed Services

Codit is also supporting Brussels Airlines in the long term with Managed Services. This includes monitoring the BizTalk Server and Sentinet environment, so Codit can resolve issues as soon as they might occur. Every three months a big audit is held. Codit takes care of any necessary maintenance and also ensures Sentinet is kept up to date. "We're taking advantage of Codit's services in all the different phases, from designing the solution to maintaining it once it's been implemented."

"Codit has accelerated Brussels Airlines' digital transformation"

Simon Lamkin
CIO at Brussels Airlines

> *"If it's an important project, you can be confident in entrusting it to Codit"*
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> Simon Lamkin
> CIO at Brussels Airlines

Conclusion

Simon Lamkin would choose Codit again. "You have to be able to see that your partner is going to fit in with your DNA. They need to have an affinity with your industry and understand the importance of the project for your organisation. We've had the experience that if it's an important project, you can be confident in entrusting it to Codit."

"It wouldn't be a problem if we had to change passenger system again, either. All integrations have been so well documented that another system can be connected to the applications it needs to share information with quickly and efficiently. The current PSS will perhaps be in use for five to ten years before it has to make way for another new one. But BizTalk is here to stay."

The benefits

Applications share information securely and efficiently

Applications are better utilised by crew and customers

Faster problem resolution

Secure and controlled collaboration with third parties through API Management

Codit Managed Services helps providing peace of mind

Ready for digital transformation thanks to integration and API Management

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