

GLOBAL SOLUTION IMPROVES DATA QUALITY ACROSS ENTIRE OPERATIONAL CHAIN

Challenge

Metrix, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sibelga responsible for reading gas and electricity meters in the Brussels region, was relying on an outdated, home-grown application that had multiple shortcomings: search functionalities were limited, agents could not correct their own mistakes and planners were unable to organize the agents' work better or more flexibly. To meet changing deadlines and quality criteria requirements, Metrix needed more visibility on their field agents' tasks, including a better planning tool and a modern PDA application that would optimize and increase the reliability of their work.

Solution

Metrix's new central application called "Mixer" was developed by Software AG's Global Consulting Services (GCS) using webMethods Composite Application Framework (CAF) together with a graphical mobile application. Mixer has directly increased the quality of consumption data retrieved from meter readings by 20% and has brought clear and significant improvements across Sibelga's entire operational chain. The comprehensive IT solution introduced new capabilities for Metrix agents and planners and has enabled Metrix to organize their metering business from end-to-end.

Benefits

- Data quality improved by 20%
- Routes downloaded and data sent via GPRS, saving field agents two hours every day
- Faster feedback helps prevent and resolve problems quicker
- Flexible design allows readings to now be taken with just one hand
- Integrated, validated data adds value to Business Intelligence reporting and KPI tracking



Sibelga is the only electricity and natural gas distribution network operator in the Brussels-Capital Region. To fulfill new Belgian legal requirements incorporating European directives re-organizing the energy market and to simplify and optimize network management in Brussels, 19 communes decided to combine Interelec, Interga and Sibelgas into a single entity called Sibelga. Metrix, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sibelga, has close to 50 employees and is responsible for reading gas and electricity meters—approximately 2 million readings annually.

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“Software AG’s Global Consulting Services has been extremely helpful in enabling us to take maximum advantage of the latest technology. At Sibelga, the perception of the project as a whole has been very good; Mixer has significantly improved our upstream processes.”

Philippe Colin | Head of IT Department | Sibelga, Belgium

Sibelga: the energy link for Brussels

Since privatization of the energy market, Sibelga is the single distribution network operator for electricity and natural gas in the region around Brussels. It operates closely between the energy providers who use its networks and the inhabitants of Brussels. The company executes approximately 2 million annual meter readings via its subsidiary Metrix. The data is processed by Metrix and then transmitted to Sibelga who, in turn, validates and relays it to the various energy providers so they can calculate their clients’ invoices.

In 2005 Sibelga decided to completely revamp its gas and electric meter-reading software, equipment and processes. To achieve this aim, the company launched a new subsidiary, Metrix; the project code name was Mixer.

Sibelga relies on quality data

At the same time as development was progressing with Mixer, Sibelga was also redeveloping their management applications to access their networks. The head of Sibelga’s IT department, Philippe Colin related, “Because Mixer is an upstream application, it was crucial that it was first of all smoothly integrated into our New Network Access Management (NNAM) solution, and second, able to support our changing business needs. Mixer successfully went live in February 2009 and the improvement is quite significant. The quality, consistency and reliability of our data has increased by 20%!”

Colin continued, “Meter readings are an integral part of our ‘meter-to-cash’ process and our data quality is essential because it influences the quality of the entire process. It is all the more important to Sibelga because, in a privatized market, our revenue depends on the energy that flows through our network. Not to mention that it has direct impact on our company image: reading the meter is one of the few times the residents of Brussels have contact with their network provider.”

Mixer makes Sibelga more mobile

Guillaume Zuyderhoff, IT Domain Manager at Sibelga describes the process, “The meter reading data collected is automatically integrated between the central application and Sibelga’s ERP SAP. The central application, developed by Software AG’s Global Consulting Services using webMethods Composite Application Framework (CAF) and Java, organizes the meter reading routes into batches that are assigned to agents equipped now with a modern PDA and Mixer Mobile, a mobile meter reading application from BiiON (ACT’L Group). Mixer Mobile uses GPRS to retrieve the scheduled routes and transmit the data readings to and from the central application in the form of a Web service.”

“This is a substantial improvement,” Zuyderhoff noted. “Previously the agents had to be onsite to load their daily routes. The new solution has allowed the company to save two person-hours per agent every day.” As part of the process, the readings are checked to ensure they are realistic and are validated or rejected accordingly. In the case of a rejection, the agent is notified immediately and can take a new reading.

Mixer project moves excellence upstream

Zuyderhoff related, “The time savings and increase in efficiency has been significant. The validated data is integrated into SAP and exported daily to the SAS Business Intelligence tool for reports and Key Performance Indicator tracking. Thanks to this online transmission, Sibelga has increased control and more transparent data as schedulers receive updates every half hour and can organize the work of the agents better.”

“For our roughly forty agents,” Zuyderhoff explained, “this means a greater degree of flexibility as well. The application is designed in such a way that it allows readings to be taken with just one hand. The new PDAs have been very well received overall.”

“Throughout this project,” continued Zuyderhoff, “Software AG’s Global Consulting Services has been extremely helpful in enabling us to take maximum advantage of the latest technology.” “And at Sibelga,” Colin added, “the perception of the project as a whole has been very good; Mixer has significantly improved our upstream processes.”

KEY COMPONENTS

webMethods **Composite Application Framework (CAF)**, an easy-to-use development environment that delivers rapid results without coding, was used to create Mixer, Sibelga’s new central meter reading application.

Software AG’s **Global Consulting Services (GCS)** developed a new central and mobile integrated solution that gives Metrix better control on tours design, provides real-time communication using GPRS and enables them to meet quality and timing targets specified by Sibelga.

ABOUT SOFTWARE AG

Software AG is the global leader in Business Process Excellence. Our 40 years of innovation include the invention of the first high-performance transactional database, Adabas; the first business process analysis platform, ARIS; the first B2B server and SOA-based integration platform, webMethods. We are unique in offering the world’s only end-to-end—and easiest to use—business process management (BPM) solutions, with the lowest Total-Cost-of-Ownership.

Our industry-leading brands, ARIS, webMethods, Adabas, Natural and IDS Scheer Consulting, represent a unique portfolio for; process strategy, design, integration and control, SOA-based integration and data management, process-driven SAP implementation, and strategic process consulting and services. Our comprehensive software and services solutions allow companies to continuously achieve their business results faster.

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