Press release

STP, a subsidiary of La Poste, overhauls its main business application with Hardis

Société de Traitement de Presse (STP), a subsidiary of the La Poste group, has called on Hardis to rethink its core business application for newspaper subscriber distribution. The new application is built around five functional modules, and interfaces with three information systems.

Grenoble, March 19, 2014 – Hardis, an IT services, business software publishing and facilities management company, announces that it has been commissioned by STP, a subsidiary of the La Poste group which handles the processing and delivery of subscription newspapers, to completely redevelop its core business application. Main objective: to improve control of the deposits made by newspaper publishers in order to adjust their month-end billing by automating the reconciliation between declared and actual cash flows. Connected to three information systems, the new application has been brought into production step by step, around five functional models.

Complex flows, three interconnected information systems
Société de Traitement de Presse (STP) is one of the eight entities of Viapost, the La Poste group' logistics, delivery and sustainable transport holding company. Created in 1996, it specializes in the industrial processing and delivery of mail multi-products in France and internationally: subscription newspapers by mail, high-volume mail products, packages, etc.

As part of its subscriber newspaper business, STP proposes to take charge of the entire logistical chain of subscriber newspaper distribution, from reception through to delivery, including the printing of addresses and personalized packaging (shrink-wrapped or in envelope). STP's 800 employees handle the logistics and dispatch of 1.2 billion newspapers every year. To manage this activity, the company relies on two data flows: upstream, exchanges with the newspaper publishers (advice of deposits), and downstream, billing of services, carried out by La Poste. The reconciliation between the publishers' declared flows and the actual flows is carried out by Viapost employees, using a specific industry tool (RFID chips and readers, imaging of containers, etc.) A total of three information systems are interconnected: two of the La Poste group (data exchange and billing) and that of Viapost (production application).

"Before, the agents had to perform two inputs, one for each flow: a time-consuming system and a source of errors. We needed to have better controls on the deposits made by our clients. That's why we decided to combine the production and billing flow in a single application," explains Didier Blanchard, Head of studies at the Mail IT division of the La Poste group.

At the beginning of 2011, detailed terms of reference were drawn up. At the same time, STP sought advice from three different companies. The involvement of three distinct information systems and the functional complexity of the processes to be handled opened the way to a large number of solutions: *"Among the responses obtained, which differed appreciably from one to another, that of Hardis seemed to us to have the strongest supporting structure, both technical and in terms of project approach,"* says Franck Lamas, CIO of Viapost. *"In view of the scale of the project, Hardis' teams proposed dividing it into five functional modules, with a centralized architecture in Viapost IT department so as to avoid problems of consolidation"*.

A project divided into five phases

The project, dubbed 'PEC' from the French initials *Prise En Charge* (taking charge) of subscription newspapers, started in June 2011. As well as simplifying inputs, the new application aims to provide a more advanced user experience and new functionalities. One of these is the reconciliation between declared and actual flows, with the aid of barcodes, as well as advanced ergonomics in order to facilitate production agents' mastery.

Functionalities were devised in the course of development and commissioning of each of the five modules after integrating the references of the MERIDIEN contracts, and to a very tight schedule: the deposit management module was commissioned in November 2012, as was the module for integrating declared flows. This was quickly followed, in December, by the quantity/quality calculation module and, at the beginning of 2013, by supervision of the PEC. Several months were then spent stabilizing the application, before putting the pre-invoicing and invoicing flows into production in the fall of 2013.

"Quasi-in-house" project management

For commissioning the first module, in the fall of 2012, the "big bang" solution was chosen. This was to avoid the complexity of a parallel run, even a temporary one. "*Despite numerous load tests, some performance problems appeared on launch*," explains Franck Lamas. *"But thanks to the excellent reactions of Hardis team, we were able to iron out these glitches very quickly*".

Hardis team numbered as many as ten people, as well as the six STP employees and the representatives of the La Poste Group and its CIO Mail. With a collaborative approach which really was the governing principle for the whole project: *"Hardis provided us with a tool for submitting requests for developments of templates and reporting anomalies. The project heads were present at every stage, in all meetings... exactly as if they had been part of the in-house team,"* says the CIO. A project that will continue after delivery of the last module, with the implementation over time of requests for further development in the context of a third-party application maintenance contract.

About Hardis

Created in 1984, Hardis Group performs a dual role of software publisher and IT consulting and services company supporting its clients in the digitization of their services. Hardis is not like other companies. From the very outset, its growth has been founded on a pragmatic approach, local values and an unwavering commitment to both its customers and its employees. In fact, Hardis' founders continue to manage the company to this day, with 25% of its employees holding shares in the business and 100% of its workforce based in France.

Hardis focuses on seven major sectors: Cloud infrastructure and management; development and third-party application maintenance (TPAM); consulting and project owner support, logistics and transport (Reflex package), development tools (Adelia Studio) and payroll outsourcing (Saphyr application).

As a software developer, Hardis is capable of integrating its own solutions, and can also call on the services of a network of partners. Its consultants master the main methodologies for quality IT projects such as ITIL, CMM, etc.

Hardis posted turnover figures of €54.7 million in 2012. The Group currently has more than 2,500 customers and 630 employees. Based in Grenoble, Hardis has four other agencies in Lyon, Paris, Lille and Nantes.

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