



PROJECT REFERENCE

FLAMCO DEVELOPS FLAMCONNECT REMOTE SERVICE BASED ON CONNXT PLATFORM

REMOTE MONITORING
AND REMOTE SERVICE
HAVE CHANGED
FLAMCO'S BUSINESS
MODEL



THE FLAMCO GROUP IS A SUBSIDIARY OF DUTCH MANUFACTURING COMPANY AALBERTS NV. IN ADDITION TO ITS WELL-KNOWN PRESSURE VESSELS AND INSTALLATION MATERIAL, FLAMCO ALSO PROVIDES COMPREHENSIVE HEATING AND COOLING SOLUTIONS TO INSTALLATION COMPANIES, UTILITIES AND HOUSING CORPORATIONS. SINCE 2017, THE COMPANY HAS BEEN TAKING STEPS TO TRANSFORM ITSELF FROM A SUPPLIER OF PRODUCTS INTO A PARTNER FOR THE INSTALLATION INDUSTRY THAT PROVIDES HEATING & COOLING-AS-A-SERVICE. THE CONNXT PLATFORM SERVES AS THE TECHNICAL FOUNDATION FOR THIS SERVICE.

IMPLEMENTATION

Aalberts NV has long been convinced that digitalisation enables new business models. It is for a good reason that Emiel Woestenberg has the job title Director Digital Products & Connectivity. 'The role is a combination of business development and innovation, and it gives me the freedom to explore different ways of offering customers our services, using digital solutions,' he says.

In 2017, Emiel got Flamco, one of the subsidiaries of Aalberts

NV, to take the first steps in remote reading of pressure vessels in boiler houses and automatic refilling of the system. 'We started out with a very simple IoT application: a sensor mounted on a pressure vessel that transmits the pressure to an app on a mobile phone. Plus a solution that automatically refills the system if the pressure is too low,' Woestenberg says.

He soon found out that this solution had been developed predominantly from the perspective of technology, and did not focus on creating added value for customers. 'Customers want to know what is happening. That means you also have to provide a remote dashboard which shows them which systems have been refilled, with how many litres and when the refill took place. You also have to make sure this is communicated.' He also discovered that the company's then partner was actually too small for the scale on which Flamco wanted to deploy this solution. After all, setting up a technical proof of concept is very different from rolling out a new service nationwide.

VISION AND TECHNICAL MUSCLE

This is why Flamco started looking for a new supplier, but soon became overwhelmed by the sheer number of potential business partners and solutions out there. 'There are an awful lot of companies operating in this market, but very few of them focus on the business value to be achieved. Yes, consultancy firms may do so, but then you end up spending gobs of money on an advisory report and you still don't have a working service.'

'THE SUBSTANTIAL ADDED VALUE OF THIS REMOTE SERVICE PLATFORM COMPARED TO THE APP WE USED TO HAVE LIES IN THE FACT THAT THE DASHBOARD TRACKS HISTORY AND WARNS IF THERE IS A SUSPECTED LEAK'

OrangeNXT stood out in that slew of suppliers thanks to its winning combination of technical muscle and business vision. A proof of value was set up during a '20-day challenge', which allowed Woestenberg to gauge customer feedback. 'We made one product, a digital manometer, accessible through a gateway and developed a dashboard that shows the status and history of the pressure inside the system. This dashboard also allows you to set up the necessary notifications. When we showed this to customers, orders started coming in almost immediately,' says Woestenberg.

'The substantial added value of this remote service platform compared to the app we used to have lies in the fact that the dashboard tracks history and warns if there is a suspected leak. After all, if a central heating system needs to be refilled more often than you would expect with normal use, there is a good chance that there is a leak somewhere. The OrangeNXT platform supports us in sending a notification to the service technician, informing him that the vessel has been refilled, but that a service check needs to be scheduled in order to prevent future malfunctions. This allows us to properly plan the service schedules.'

FLAMCONNECT REMOTE SERVICE

Flamco started small, but expanded the number of applications quickly. Currently, almost every product can be monitored remotely and the Flamconnect Remote Service is prominently featured on the company's website as its main service. Flamco sells this service as a digital assistant that monitors the status of all Flamco assets, tells the user when a product needs maintenance and tracks the cause of failures. Woestenberg: 'This service allows us to deliver a huge efficiency gain to our customers. Service technicians no longer have to show up on weekends to refill a central heating system or for an emergency repair. Because the refilling happens automatically and a malfunction is often noticed at an early stage because a device shows abnormal behaviour. This means you can perform the required maintenance on time.'

PROJECT OUTCOME

WOESTENBERG CONCLUDES: 'WE STARTED THIS PROJECT BASED ON THE PHILOSOPHY "THINK BIG, START SMALL". THIS HAS PROVED TO BE THE RIGHT APPROACH.'

We have expanded and improved the solution step by step and now we are at the point where our entire business model is changing. We are no longer a supplier of heating and cooling products, but increasingly a provider of services: heating & cooling-as-a-service.'

The new system has introduced a whole new way of working, not only for customers, but also for Flamco itself. The customer support department is no longer only reactive, but also proactive. They alert customers when they notice a problem with the system. Woestenberg recognises that this organisational change is much more complex than the technical part of the solution. 'Your entire business model changes and that has an impact on just about all areas of the organisation. It really is a change management project.'

THINK BIG, START SMALL

The new concept is currently also being applied in other divisions of the Aalberts Group. This includes COMAP, which supplies products for use in private homes. Woestenberg: 'We can remotely read the electricity, water and energy consumption of apartments and transfer this information to the housing association on a monthly basis.' This means that our service portfolio is expanding step by step.

MORE INFORMATION?

To learn more about conNXT and its capabilities, feel free to contact us at any time - you will find our contact details below. Start monitoring your data today!



Flamco

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