

“Flexibility is our priority” -
exclusive interview with CIO of
Ramsat S.A.



What kind of feature should BPM system have? What to do and what to avoid during its implementation? What is the difference between ERP and BPMS implementation? Piotr Jaskiewicz, CIO of Ramsat S.A., shares his expertise on these and several more interesting subjects.

WEBCON: What were your beginnings with BPMS? What have you considered while choosing a platform?

Piotr Jaskiewicz, CIO: In my company’s case the goal was to choose stable, scalable and flexible platform for business process automation. The decision was made mainly by IT Department and at the very beginning we decided that any turnkey projects won’t work for us. We also didn’t want involvement of external company to make an analysis and implementation according to it.

We were searching for a system that could be handled not only by IT professionals, but also by employees with less experience in that area. The point was to just model and automate processes without hardcoding. Moreover, we wanted to be able to make new processes and modify them only using re-sources available in our internal IT department.

We were searching for a system that could be handled not only by IT professionals, but also by employees with less experience in that area. The point was to just model and automate processes without hardcoding

- How did implementation and automation of first processes look like?

Due to the fact we chose a flexible system, we didn’t feel pressure to make a very thorough analysis and map processes in the system perfectly. We knew the flexibility provided by the platform would allow us to easily make changes in the future and adjust processes to our current needs.

Within a month and a half we had installed the system on our premises and implemented two, biggest processes that automated cost invoice processing and purchase procedure. Then, using only our internal resources, we’ve been developing other workflows.

The ability to track users’ actions in every step of a process turned out to be particularly useful during the workflows development. Currently, we are able to check who, when and at what stage of work on the document introduced and modified and how did every single change look like. Such transparency is crucial for us as it allows to thoroughly control our activities.

- Implementation of BPM system usually means change in the way processes work in organization and sometimes it meets with employees reluctance. Could you reveal how did it look like in your company?

We didn’t want to force our employees to work in a new way. We have implemented processes we were convinced they’ll significantly ease up and speed up the work, and then we waited for a results.

When it comes to technical matters we took iterative approach. The company has bought the

platform and along with WEBCON have implemented the first two main processes. Additionally, we have introduced a correspondence flow which has allowed us to create only one point of document registration and their conversion to electronic form. It was very important for us, because as a sales company we have nearly 200 stores in whole Poland. Thanks to such workflow, we are able to control all documents that come from our subsidiaries.

We were aware that even those three, aforementioned workflows would generate certain benefits, e.g. regulation of documents flow, elimination of delays and ability to track them down on every step of the process. That's why we decided to implement the first three workflows (having in mind their positive impact on the organization) and then introduce another ones if the solution proved to be working well.

The first three months after implementation were typical for such projects. Employees had to adapt and learn to executing day-to-day duties in slightly different way. There were no significant examples of displeasure or anything. After a few months, employees started to come to IT department by themselves and ask for another workflows and giving suggestions to automate next processes.

- Does the fact that employees come to you and ask for more make you proud that system works well or worried about the amount of work to do?

Most of all, it is the best proof we made a good decision and gives me a lot of satisfaction! On the other hand, it really isn't a big problem for us. Making new processes [in WEBCON BPS] is not that big challenge after all and brings certain benefits to the company. Due to the fact we can do everything by ourselves, we do not consider initiative of our employees as another issue to solve. If we were using services of external company, then that probably would be a problem. But in our case we're just happy to make our organization more efficient.

- It is very common for companies to be hesitant when it comes to make a decision how to modify processes during BPMS implementation. On the one hand, there's a need to make the best process possible, on the other, a fear what to do if the process is not exactly as good as it was supposed to be. How did you approach to implementation in that matter?

At the stage of implementation we didn't want to create processes in exactly the same way as they worked before implementation. I think that would be a mistake. Instead, we started with a premise that we invested in flexible platform that will allow us to easily make modifications in the future. Having a vision what we wanted to achieve during the next year or two, in a way of evolution we wanted to develop optimal solutions.

It is important to keep in mind, that transition from paper to electronic documents itself causes things to work differently. Usually in those aspects, we didn't expect. Therefore, there will always be need to make changes after system's implementation. Due to the fact that hiring external developers is expensive and takes time, we preferred to invest in a system that would allow us to make any changes and new processes by ourselves.

Within a month and a half we had installed the system on our premises and implemented two, biggest processes that automated cost invoice processing and purchase procedure. Then, using only our internal resources, we've been developing other workflows.

- Could you give our readers some tips about what to avoid during implementation?

Based on my experience, when it comes to creating workflows, it is important to avoid getting too much into details and creating various functionalities that in fact may not be even used. It is crucial to implement workflows and be sure they will actually work. Therefore, in my opinion, it is a mistake to analyze every single detail in process and then try to transfer it to a system. When it comes to handling paper documents, some activities are performed in specific way for certain work environment and cannot be mapped 'as is' in a BPM system.

Workflows should be aimed to standardize processes and users' activities. Therefore, there is no need to constantly make some small modifications that would withhold other projects.

- What is the difference between implementation of BPMS and implementation of ERP?

There is a huge difference. Implementation of ERP is quite a challenge for every organization. For example, transition from one ERP to another, requires very thorough analysis, lots of time and money, and in many cases – work after business hours to see if everything works fine. Additionally, IT departments need to face data migration and very detailed process mapping.

In my opinion, it is a mistake to analyze every single detail in process and then try to transfer it to a system. Workflows should be aimed to standardize processes and users' activities.

Meanwhile, BPM systems allow for a fresh start. It is possible to create and migrate just one process that will not affect other ones. In case of ERP it is not possible, because processes overlap. E.g. there's no way to separate a cost invoice from a sale invoice. Additionally, BPMS allows to create workflows step-by-step with possibility to make modifications in the meantime. It makes a huge difference and make implementation go smoother and faster.

- You mentioned that from the very beginning your department assumed there will be a need to make some modifications to implemented processes. How does the situation look like after 2 years of using the system?

Most of all, we have far more processes, because as I mentioned, employees ask us to automate new ones. You can almost say it is "contagious". When one department sees that the other one can do something in faster and simpler way, its representative ask to make new workflows for their people.

When it comes to processes created along with WEBCON during the system implementation, they are now more detailed and allow to achieve more. We enhanced them in terms of analytics. It gives us better control over what's going on and thanks to KPI we can identify bottlenecks and fix them.

- How many people use the system in your company and how does it affect them?

We have two groups of employees. First one (around 400 people) can view documents and processes that regard them (e.g. leave requests).

The second group consist of business users which create and modify documents, accept costs,

make orders etc. There are approximately 100 of them.

With that kind of number of employees, proper BPM system ensures higher work efficiency, simplification and shortening of daily duties. Additionally, we value a lot a possibility to control our activities through KPI and also time and money savings resulting from e.g. electronic document management.

At some stage of organization development, there's no question "do we invest in IT system" but "in which IT system do we invest and what do we want to achieve".

- Thank you for your time.

You're welcome.