IT PARTNER

IT Partner accelerates the development of port logistics software with the Thinkwise low-code platform

IT Partner is a successful internationally operating software company, which specializes in the automation of the port logistics sector. The company opted for Thinkwise to accelerate projects for its customers and create a future-proof foundation for its software development.

IT Partner has been developing software for global organizations in the port logistics sector since starting business in 1999. Apart from customization the company also provides various internally developed software packages, including a Terminal Operating System (TOS) for (container) terminals. In 2019, the company received an order to develop a Port Community System for the port of Saint Martin. This turned out to be the perfect initial project to develop software using the Thinkwise low-code platform, with which the company had earlier conducted a Proof of Value project. Rob Jordan, co-owner and managing director of IT Partner: "We delivered this project in record time; much faster than with traditional development tools. Furthermore the final result has been extremely positively received, especially by the end users around the port of Saint Martin."

From customization to packaged software

The port logistics sector has always been very dynamic, with fast changing trends in the area of programming languages and new technology. Due to a lack of ready-made systems for the sector, IT Partner initially developed mainly customized solutions for its customers. However, over the past few years, it started to develop a greater number of standard packages to provide organizations with a working solution faster. However, it soon became clear that the next bottleneck during development was the use of traditional development tools. "We had to make choices every time we developed a new product," says Rob. "If you look at the current development landscape, it very quickly drives you crazy.

Whatever is popular today, can be obsolete by tomorrow. Which technology should you use? Do we adopt Angular or React? What are the pros and cons, and how long will a technology remain popular? One or two years? We are once again creating our own legacy. Our conclusion was that it is not about technology, but about developing good solutions for our customers."

IT Partner has been interested in low-code development for quite some time. This would put an end to the recurring technological choices and it would also eliminate a lot of specialized programming work from the development process. During an earlier market analysis it was apparent that most low-code systems are focused on the development of apps and additions to existing systems. Rob Jordan: "Thinkwise appeared to be the only company able to actually build mission critical ERP-type systems. That is in fact what we do, so it was a reasonably simple choice for us to make."

Port of Saint Martin

In 2019, the company got the go-ahead to develop a Port Community System for the port of Saint Martin. This was the perfect time to implement the company's low-code ambitions. This new project must be completely developed from scratch and many basic functions need to be built, such as user management, 2-factor authentication, and functions for the use of encryption databases and anonymizing privacy-sensitive data. In Rob's opinion, this makes it eminently suitable to carry out this project using low-code: "Many of these types of standard functions are already available in the Thinkwise Platform. In addition, the system must also be able to operate in the cloud, and there were specific requirements with regard to web-based functionality and apps. We were able to achieve all this with Thinkwise, without the need to bring in any specialized knowledge."

Proof of Value project

IT Partner first carried out a successful Proof of Value project with Thinkwise where, during a period of three weeks, its development team became acquainted with the low-code platform. Directly following this, on 1 April, the project for the Port of Saint Martin started and IT Partner were able to already deliver a working system in the cloud by 1 December.

Rob Jordan: "That is incredibly fast, certainly when you consider that Thinkwise was a new development environment for us. We have developed and implemented a working system within six months, and that is a lot faster than with traditional development."

Furthermore, the implemented software was extremely positively received by the end users. "They were dumbfounded by what we had already delivered within a few months," says Rob. "But the unambiguous structure and the consistent 'look and feel' also made a big impression. When a user knows a few basic actions, they can quickly work with the system."

In addition, due to the high development speed and the built-in functions from Thinkwise, IT Partner were able to deliver more functionality than was initially planned. For example, a complete integration with the port system was produced, so that a great deal of information was immediately available in the new platform. Additionally, it was required to send notifications to users via e-mail, SMS and WhatsApp. This could also be included in the first release, by making use of the standard possibilities available in Thinkwise.

Benefits and results

One of the main benefits of Thinkwise, according to Rob Jordan, is the fact that IT Partner can make full use of the potential of its software developers: "With low-code our developers are far less dependent on specialized programming knowledge. Their added value is understanding the idea behind an application, being able to think through business processes and come up with creative solutions. People with business insight and somewhat less technical knowledge can build very good applications with Thinkwise. Low-code is eminently suitable for this."

The greatest benefit for the customers of IT Partner is that they get a working solution very quickly. Furthermore the low-code foundation ensures that they can always modify and expand their business applications at a later date.

The developers at IT Partner were initially quite skeptical about low-code, but after their first experience with Thinkwise they quickly changed their minds. "The fact that you see results very quickly was decisive," says Rob. "And many standard errors, or things that you regularly have to repeat, disappear. You are not continuously busy with technology or formatting, because the attention is fully focused on functionality and processes."

Strategic choice

It is clear for Rob Jordan that low-code development is the future for IT Partner. He expects that most existing packaged software will be gradually replaced by Thinkwise. Furthermore he recently started a new joint venture with a customer in Suriname. "We are going to jointly re-develop some products that we have developed for them in the past. We recruited new employees for this and set up a new company. And that is focused 100% on Thinkwise."

Thinkwise has now become a very strategic part of IT Partner, which sees low-code as an important foundation for its product range.

Rob Jordan: "In the future we will support everything that has anything to do with logistics and administration, with low-code solutions. With Thinkwise as our business partner we are aiming for future-proof software development."