

Advantage

The BASIS International Magazine

Create Your Masterpiece



**A Picture is Worth
1,000 Words**

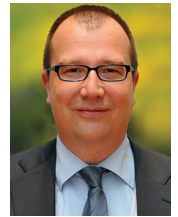
page 4

**Introducing
BBj Unit Test**

page 20

**Dash Boredom With
the Dashboard Utility**

page 28



By Patrick Schnur
European Marketing/PR

Streamlining Communications at Stam Car Dealerships

These are challenging times for car dealerships. The management of Stam Groep, who runs 13 car dealerships, several gas stations, and car workshops in the Netherlands, decided to win a competitive edge by investing in better communications. BASIS partner CASE-TM supplied a number of state-of-the-art mobile solutions to do just that. But first, CASE took care of Stam's legacy ERP system.

Challenges

In these current economically uncertain times, car owners tend to drive their vehicles longer and spend less money on new ones. Therefore, car dealerships are stuck in a shrinking process that has been going on for several years. The Stam Groep, headquartered in Amersfoort, the Netherlands, has found answers to position them well in this evermore competitive market: They focus on constantly improving customer satisfaction and maintain the tradition of using technology wisely to achieve it. A customer satisfaction index of 96/100 out of 6,228 customer reviews collected on their website proves that this claim rings true.

Stam's IT partner for more than 20 years has been CASE-TM of Nieuwegein. "Stam is one of our 'oldest' customers who always had a focus on customer relations and cost-effective processes," explains CASE's managing director Kees Gerritsen. "In the

face of the economic fallback in the last years, Stam developed strategies to intensify their customer relations even more."

First things first: Upgrading and integrating the ERP Systems

Together, Stam and CASE got to work and analyzed the situation. The suggestion was to use smartphones and tablets to improve the quality of communication with customers, but also within the group itself. Next was an idea to make management information available anywhere, anytime, on any device, throughout the group. Stam wanted to optimize communication with customers by using modern media such as text messages or email. To make the solution efficient and to save costs in everyday work, all these functions should fully integrate in the existing ERP system, which actually was an agglomerating of several systems. Each of the group's branches ran their own, the software generations spreading from BBX 2 thru BBj 14.

"The first thing we did was to lift the current application to release BBj 14, which enabled us to use JNLP connections and/or BUI to connect the envisioned apps seamlessly to the ERP system", explains Gerritsen. "The second step was to put up a Data Dictionary, including a complete documentation of the existing data, which was a prerequisite to make them SQL-ready. The third step was to integrate all separate companies of the group to one BBj application server." The database is not so easy to integrate, explains Gerritsen: "Historically, the original ERP system was just copied from one company to the next. Therefore, all databases use the same record denominations, keys, etc. So, the fourth step will be to bring the data of all companies into one BBj database."

Direct Customer Communications: Check

Upgrading and integrating the ERP system was a prerequisite for using the BASIS BUI technology, which, in turn, allowed CASE to design a whole cornucopia of apps, mobile

or other, coined for simplifying customer communications. Most of them are single-purpose apps that eliminate hurdles in the communication processes. Some, on the other hand, are pretty complex. For instance, CASE created a completely new BBj-based email system from scratch.

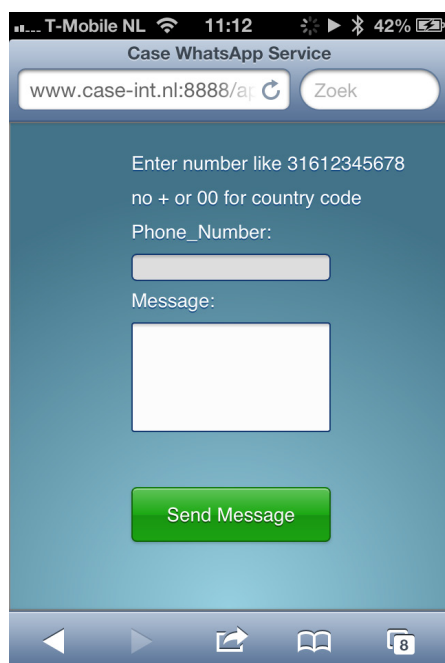


Figure 1. A CASE tool for sending WhatsApp messages without a phone, either for stand-alone use, or integrated in an application.

It was worth the effort says Gerritsen, “We wanted our own emailer in BBj so that we could do read actions based on customer-selection, invoice-selection, etc.”

The users, however, are agnostic about the complexity of these changes. What they see is just a number of easy-to-use applications that are fully integrated into the Stam ERP system and help them do their job better. These are a few examples:

Every night, the daily invoice data is written to the accounting software. The process automatically generates email to the customers, individualized for their car, date of visit, etc., which contains a link to a

questionnaire to collect feedback on their customer experience. Management views the customers' input via iReport Charts; the marketing department receives iReport Charts with views on how many customers have given their email addresses, and how many customers declined to do so.

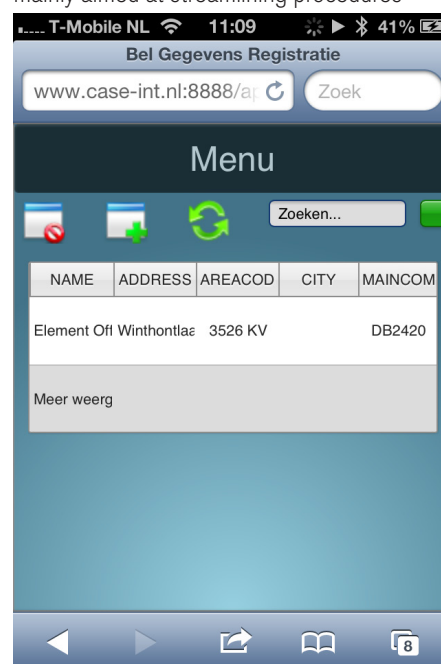
Two tools generate text messages or Whatsapp messages automatically to inform the customer when an inspection is due, when to have the winter tires replaced, when to show up for a technical certification, when the car is ready for pick-up from the workshop, and so on. Obviously, both parties profit from this: The customer always has a safe car that complies with official regulations, and the workshop generates capacity utilization.

- CASE integrated a [Call customer] button into the CRM system, which automatically places a call to the customer (Fig. 1).
- The invoicing process was switched to use PDF documents that can be sent via snail mail, or email, which include links like 'Go to our website', 'Call us', 'Check out this new special offer', or 'Check route to location' to further enhance the customer experience with Stam.
- CASE created a mailer-demon checker to register if an email bounced. It triggers a response program to contact the customer for a correct email address.
- All customer data, such as the type of customer, type of car, and so on, are forwarded automatically to the CRM database via management files and web server pages to allow for optimized customer support and pinpoint planning of marketing activities.

Gerritsen explains, “All in all, these apps have one common goal: We want Stam Group to be just that one step quicker in touch with the customer than their competition.”

Process Optimizations Behind the Curtains

CASE's activities did not end with the communication processes that are directly targeted at customers and prospects. There was also a lot of activity behind the scenes, mainly aimed at streamlining procedures

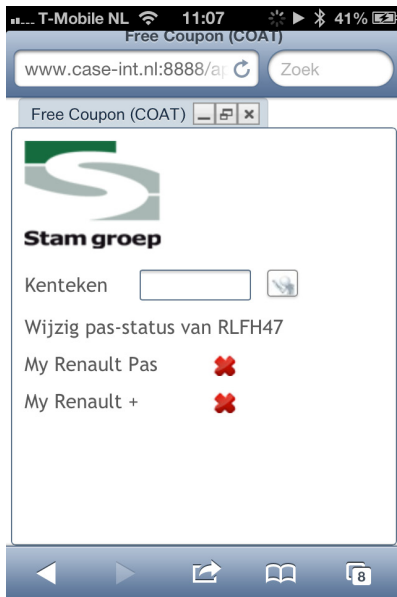


and optimizing the numbers of devices and licenses needed. Specifically, the aim was to allow employees to fulfil certain tasks in one fell swoop, saving them the time-consuming need to switch between different devices and/or applications.

- A great deal of management information is now available on tablets any time, anywhere, in real time. The reports are generated with iReport based on dynamically built SQL commands.
- For automating communication processes such as ordering, procuring approvals and other, CASE implemented WSDL/SOAP connectors. HTMLView allows reading and submitting information from and to the

different company websites, saving the need to switch between applications and browsers.

- An integrated PDF OCR process was installed for easier import of invoices,



replacing an extra scan-server with separate software that was previously used.

- To simplify the handling of car parts in the group's warehouses, CASE introduced barcode scanning via smartphone and tablets, with direct exchange of data with the ERP system. The warehouse employees save time and avoid potential errors by not having to type 15-figure part numbers when ordering, taking inventory, or issuing parts from stock.

Summary

What's on Gerritsen's agenda for the months to come? "First of all, our experiences with the new development environment with Eclipse were so positive that we decided to further promote the possibilities of BASIS development tools explicitly with our customers. We discovered that it is much easier to apply modern teamwork paradigms like Agile Development with BASIS tools and the new Eclipse IDE. Thanks to BUI, we can even dump all other web development tools we had been experimenting with, and will continue to develop mobile and desktop applications efficiently with just one toolset. This will greatly reduce our project durations and make our work more efficient than ever before."

According to Gerritsen, the newly gained SQL-readiness of the data by updating the systems to BBJ allows for better management information via individualized iReport documents and/or the new Digital Dashboard - not only for the Stam Group, of course, but also for many other CASE customers. Given the ever-growing importance of mobile data in the business world, Gerritsen also sees an opportunity for his company to obtain new customers, even beyond the relatively small Dutch market, adding, "It helps that BBJ applications generally are well equipped for easy localization to other markets." ■



Founded in 1910 as a car workshop, the family-run Stam Groep consists of 13 car dealerships (Renault, Dacia, and Opel), three gas stations, several car repair workshops, a leasing company, and an insurance company in the Utrecht region of the Netherlands. Stam Groep has a history of over a hundred years of innovation and customer orientation as key success factors. As early as 1972, Stam was one of the early adopters of computer technology to better run the business and to offer better customer service.

In line with the company's historic motto "Don't regret the past, don't fear the future," Stam embraces new technology to achieve better customer communications and customer satisfaction in order for customers and prospects to acknowledge them as the leading player in each field. stam.nl



A BASIS customer since 1993, CASE Automatisering b.v. in Nieuwegein manages the IT needs of a number of small- and mid-sized companies in a variety of industries from automotive to healthcare to a bowling hall.

The team of 10, led by founder and managing director Kees Gerritsen, serves about 500 users in the Netherlands and beyond.

The new company name, "CASE-TM" introduced in 2015, reflects the growing international customer base of CASE. www.case-tm.com