



BPM in Europe

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Some years ago I regularly used to teach a great course called "Developing Commercial Awareness," together with Steve Harmer-Strange, to students in the Czech republic. We always used to tell the story of the sales rep who was sent to Africa to sell shoes. When he arrived, he immediately called his company up and said: "Please get me out of here, nobody is wearing any shoes." So, the shoe company sent in another sales rep who also immediately called back home and said: "Please send all the shoes you have! Nobody is wearing shoes!"

My visit to Warsaw, Poland, in April this year to launch the BPM-Forum Polska reminded me of this story again: Beginning this year, I got an email from Aneta Biernikowicz from the Process Renewal Group Poland. Together with Adriana Debskagil, she was organizing a BPM Conference and asked if I could suggest a case study from the Netherlands or England, preferably an example from the finance market, as there were so few examples from Poland. Of course, we could! After some phone calls I got the commitment from Henk van Dijkhuizen and Marijke Brouwers of Rabo Directbank in the Netherlands. Henk was the project manager for the delivery of a BPM implementation for a greenfield fulfillment center, and Marijke is his internal client. This case study is a great example of a BPM implementation creating the "virtual Rabobank." The fulfillment center handles all direct requests in the Netherlands (Internet, call center, post). About 180,000 requests are handled per quarter. Also note that the Rabo bank is the biggest internet bank in Europe. And guess what? Rabobank does this with only eight people in the whole fulfillment center. This is a great achievement. So, no wonder that some years ago this BPM implementation won the second price at the European IT & Banking awards. Take into account that the Rabobank also participates in the Polish BGZ Bank: This made an ideal case study.

During the preparations, we also discussed the need to share information in Poland as there is still very little local BPM experience around. Setting up a Polish version of the BPM-Forum sounded like a good idea. One of the benefits of the Forum approach is its community style and informal approach; that is, getting all interested people in one room on an equal level and getting somebody to present in the local language allows for discussions to take place. After the formal presentations, when in the "off line" discussions, you really find out what the issues were and how they were resolved.

On Monday, the 24th Marijke, Henk, and I arrived in Warsaw and met with Aneta and Adrina. That evening we were treated to a great dinner by Seamus Devine of Tibco who will also help drive the BPM-Forum Polska. The next day, the day of the conference, we had about 50 people attending. I kicked off the event by announcing the BPM-Forum Polska. I was surprised by the initial, indifferent reaction. Then Marijke and Henk presented their case and got the same initial response. But, during the breaks, the questions and feedback started to flow and continued almost without stopping. The BPM-Forum model already was working from day one! The rest of the day was filled with an extensive presentation of a great local BPM case study from Polish

Telecom presented by Adriana. I understand that a lot of the people attending went home satisfied, and so did we.

The following week, I met with Pierre van Hedel, coordinator of Rabobank Poland. He was able to tell me that only 50% of the people in Poland have access to internet and use a phone dial up link. In other words, at the moment there may be little interest in internet banking or little need for a BPM supported fulfillment center but the access to internet is growing very fast; i.e., for those who can see it, the opportunities are great as “nobody is wearing shoes!” Pierre has also agreed to support the BPM-Forum Polska.

The reader may wonder why so many names are mentioned in the article. The reason is simple: The BPM-Forum is a professional community and the people behind it determine its success. Without them there would not be a BPM-Forum. All the people mentioned here have in one way or the other contributed to making this initiative a success, and I would like to thank them, and I wish the BPM-Forum Polska a great future.