

The Delta Works of Polis Direct.

INTERVIEW

By Robert Adriaans



The success of a company and its insurance process – an interview with Wolter Bosch, ICT Manager, Polis Direct.

Polis Direct (formally known as 'Going Direct'), a leading Dutch insurer, was the first insurance company to implement the IDIT™ platform.

The Company

Polis Direct began operating in 1995 using the same principle as the British 'Direct Line Insurance'. It follows a simple formula; offering new car insurance customers a 10% lower premium than what they are currently paying. By introducing specific differentiating rating criteria within their system, Polis Direct is able to offer a lower premium only to those customers with the least amount of claims, therefore ensuring only desired customers are eligible for the discount. Furthermore, by minimizing users' (such as agents) choices, Polis Direct follows an efficient process with automated, tight control which eliminates any room for error and ensures that only those customers that fit the exact criteria will be offered the 10% discount. This way, Polis Direct can offer lower premiums, whilst still maintaining good profits.

Information & Computing Technology

When Polis Direct began trading, they simply rented a floor and got an AS/400 with a copied I90 system from the holding company, Bovemij (the branch insurer of BOVAG). Unlike Bovemij though, Polis Direct decided to target the private consumer market rather than the corporate market. Over the years, Bovemij and Polis Direct became subsidiary companies of BOVAG, and by 1997/1998 Polis Direct's copied I90 system was no longer meeting requirements. Too many procedures were running inefficiently and the system was not structured adequately to enable company growth. By this time, Polis Direct was a live company and Wolter Bosch had been appointed to set-up the ICT infrastructure.

The Research and the Shortlist

Polis Direct enlisted the help of Ernst & Young and a five-year plan was developed, creating a program for the future. Research results showed that Polis Direct needed five 'ICT-enablers':

internet possibilities, a good workflow system, advanced document management with imaging, a CRM system and reporting tools. Hence, a modern, open system equipped with all these requirements had to be sourced. Joint research was conducted by Ernst & Young and Polis Direct and at the end of 1999 Bosch found IDIT™ by IDIT I.D.I. Technologies Ltd. through a LogicaCMG contact and an IT directory. According to Bosch, not only did the IDIT software fully meet all the requirements listed in the report, but many of the features were already standard – which made it clear that the product had been developed with great concentration on the core insurance processes. This is also evident for example, in the choice regarding third party tools in areas such as business intelligence and corporate performance management.

The Delta Works

According to Bosche, undoubtedly IDIT had the best system compared to all other options, but at the time, IDIT was a new company and had no references or previous international installations. Therefore during the implementation process LogicaCMG was brought in as a subcontractor for the conversion. Inside Polis Direct the IDIT system was called 'Delta' and the name 'Delta Works' was later applied by Bosch for the implementation system. Bosch came up with the name, relating it to the great Dutch project, the Delta Works (an ambitious Dutch flood defense system) which utilized three main concepts – man, process and machine, as was the case, according to Bosche, with Polis Direct when they began using the IDIT platform. After finalizing the agreement with IDIT in 2000, Polis Direct was able to begin its first project in December of the same year. This was a new car insurance product, not supported by the original software, for customers that did not fit the eligibility criteria of the original product. As this was a new product for Polis Direct, there were no conversion problems at all.

As part of the internal implementation project, which was completed in 2002, the data warehouse was included, and Panorama was chosen for use in business intelligence operations. NiceLog, a digital voice recording system was also implemented and integrated, allowing all telephone con-

versations to be recorded, consequently streamlining the registration process by enabling everything to be dealt with over the phone, after which the policy can be sent out immediately without having to wait for a customer signature. This is acceptable from a legal perspective as customers are informed in advance that all conversations are being recorded. IDIT™ also interfaces with the NiceLog database, making it simple to quickly locate previous conversations based on several search criteria.

Holland is Ready

The latest Polis Direct insurance products (car, motor and travel insurance) went live in April 2002 both at the call center and over the web (www.polisdirect.nl). According to Bosch, the conversion was an elaborate operation for Polis Direct as well as for IDIT, but things ran smoothly. A total conversion was implemented, meaning all history was included. Despite the difficulty posed by differences in the data models, the final result was very good. It was even impossible to tell if a transaction had been made in IDIT™, or in the former I90 system.

Going into the Future

During the interview Bosche emphasized that he is extremely happy with the IDIT platform and strongly believes that the company's continual in-depth focus on the insurance market is one of its many strong points. Bosch also mentioned he feels that IDIT™ should never become a general financial package, as this would increase the time-to-market, eliminating one of the main strengths of IDIT™, its short time-to-market. Additionally, Polis Direct plan to use the vast intermediary possibilities of IDIT™ in the future, as for example by selling policies at car dealerships and garages.

In conclusion, Bosch mentioned he is excited about the new IDIT™ project which is in the pipeline for Polis Direct, the "Jaffa Project", as well as about future plans for Polis Direct to begin using the latest version of IDIT™, which is fully based on J2EE web technology. This latest version and the new project will undoubtedly continue to ensure that Polis Direct remain a leading Dutch insurer while providing the company with a strong competitive edge.