

DIGINNO Best Digital Transformation Practices

Bellus Furniture – An IT solution that reduced delivery time

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Bellus Furniture was founded in 1997 and has become one of the largest manufacturers of upholstered furniture in Estonia. Its annual output is 100,000 sofas and mattresses, marketed primarily in Finland, Sweden and Norway in addition to Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Belgium, as well as Ukraine and the Baltic states.

The Challenge

Flowit OÜ, a software company, was called in to help automate the administrative processes. The initial problem was articulated as the arrival of orders to Bellus by email, which first had to be digitized and then entered into the production software. The goal was to automate the collection and movement of data in order to avoid entering the same data repeatedly, starting with the product's parameters, delivery address, etc.

Solutions

Thanks to robotic process automation (RPA), incoming information is read by a machine interface, or the clients have already entered it in a form that the program recognizes. Thus, the need to enter data manually is eliminated and data automatically reaches different programs used by company.

The goal was not to build a new monolithic interface, but rather to make existing software more effective and still maintain the ability to make changes flexibly and quickly, if required.

The solution essentially imitates a computer user that enters data daily within the sales, production, management, or other departments.



The solution allows:

- For production planning to begin without delay when the order arrives, reducing delivery time.
- To manufacture more efficiently, since it is possible during production to plan similar work processes simultaneously.
- All the data flows to different parties automatically and the need to enter it multiple times is eliminated.
- Errors in the data entry process can become quite expensive for the business. Thanks to automation, the probability of making data entry errors is minimized. This may save up to 50,000 Euro per year.
- Instead of data entry, workers have more time to deal with customer service and actual sales.

Implementation process

One of the greatest risks in implementing an improvement is a psychological one. As a rule, workers experience a negative initial reaction when a robot takes over segments of work that were previously

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done by people. When automation is seen as giving the opportunity to concentrate on more creative work, the attitude toward it usually improves.

Thus, the key factors in implementing an improvement are not so much the technical details as the company's management and encouraging the personnel to get onboard with the upgrades. On the one hand, the company must understand its own needs and discover the questions that need to be answered. On the other, mindsets and attitudes have significant impact on perceived bottlenecks, and the extent of willingness to try and accept updates.

The end clients of a business must also be open to innovation, thus the solution shall be "sold" them as well. If the number of mistakes and reclamations are decreased and delivery time is shortened, retailers are more likely to come onboard.

Results and benefits

Technology is advancing so quickly that a company must constantly consider how to make their business more effective. To stay competitive, it's critical to reduce delivery time and keep expenses as low as possible, which is why new goals and problem-solving tasks must be constantly articulated.

In the end, the digital automation and initial testing of the administrative processes at Bellus lasted two months, and the solution has been in use for about a year. Every advancement leads one to think about the further steps, and in the improvement process, issues were mapped for moving forward. That's why the production processes at Bellus are already being studied for automation.

In addition to delivery time, which is becoming an ever-more important factor in staying competitive, clients are becoming more and more concerned with convenience. While clients today are filling out order forms, in the future already completed forms will be sent to the customer based on their shopping experiences.

Photo: Julia-Maria Linna