

# Alfresco Case Study: P&V Group

The P&V Group is a Belgian insurance company with a multi-brand and multi-channel sales policy. The group has a number of different insurance businesses:

P&V Insurance, which works with a network of exclusive agents, Vivium, Arces and Piette & Partners, which sell their products via brokers, and Actel, which sells directly via the Internet and indirectly through agreements with vehicle importers.

## System consolidation due to business acquisition

Vivium is a major P&V business and was acquired by the P&V Group in 2004. It operates exclusively through brokers who offer a wide range of life and non-life products tailored to meet the needs of private individuals and businesses, ranging from the self-employed and SMEs to large corporations. In 2007, the former ING insurance business was absorbed into Vivium, highlighting a need in the area of records management and more specifically for the scanning and archiving of insurance and HR-related documents. To be able to archive the records properly within the group's existing system, a large proportion of the scanned documents had to be handled manually. Consequently, the aim of any new application would be to improve the old system across the board. The P&V Group's preference was to implement a records management solution that would also enable it to develop its strategy for Document Management (DM), Enterprise Content Management (ECM) and Web Content Management (WCM).

The P&V Group was faced with a choice: either continue using its existing application and adjust it to accommodate the new requirements, or introduce totally new technology with the capabilities required for handling the business today, as well as a range of options and possibilities for the future.

The group's ICT infrastructure department examined a number of different solutions before deciding on Alfresco Document Management, an application proposed by XenIT, a young IT services company and an accredited Alfresco Gold Partner. This choice proved to be a good one.

"We knew it would be a fight against time, because in making the switch to a new system, we would only be able to continue using the old one for six months. We also had to implement everything in a Windows environment and then switch it to Linux and MySQL, which are the more natural environments for Alfresco. Also, the Alfresco partner we were proposing to use was a very young company. Yet XenIT convinced us about their expertise and approach and so we rolled up our sleeves and got to work on some substantial challenges. These included taking our existing records and archives, which were enormous, and converting them to a totally new archive structure. But thanks to the way we worked closely together – and with the support of Alfresco R&D – we succeeded in achieving a high migration speed and meeting the very tight deadlines we had set ourselves," recalls Mark Scheers, the man in charge of ICT infrastructure in the P&V Group.



## Why Alfresco?

The task in hand was two-pronged: the solution needed to provide an answer to Vivium's short-term requirements, while at the same time being aligned with the P&V Group's longer-term vision regarding ECM. After investigating the possible solutions, Alfresco came up with the answer that the P&V Group was looking for. Mark Scheers explains:

“We wanted a single standard platform for our ECM and DM systems; plus, over time, we wanted to expand to WCM, complete with layout and studio capabilities. We also knew that we had to migrate from the old environment to a new one and so doubtless there would be some tough challenges along the way. It was a question of getting the platform and our partners right – and we ended up making the correct choice for both!”

## Implementation takes three

Peter Morel, co-founder and Business Development Director of XenIT has this to say about the implementation: “We set the targets we needed to achieve – and they were quite substantial: for scanning, up to 90% direct recognition, and for migrating and building the archive, 500 pages a minute. Because the context was atypical, from operating system to database, there was more fine-tuning involved than we thought. For example, the multi-threading required additional adjustment and for this task we received the active support of Alfresco itself. Working with a member of the Alfresco engineering department, we were able to adapt the multi-threading to Vivium's requirements.”

Mark Scheers and Peter Morel agree about the success of the implementation:

“The three parties all worked together on the solution, to the ultimate benefit of everyone involved. The P&V Group, because it now has an ECM and DM system that is fully aligned with what it was looking for and that fits in totally with its current and future needs; Alfresco, because it was able to make optimum adjustments to its own solution that could also be highly beneficial for other customers; and XenIT, because we deployed our expertise to the full and have enhanced our capabilities further as a result.”

## The results: today and tomorrow

Today, the Alfresco solution is meeting its targets with flying colours. First scan recognition has risen from less than 60% to 97%. The old archive has been transferred in all its glory and is ready to face the future. Documents are now loaded automatically into the archive and made available to users online. Additionally, a range of document flows have also been optimized, which has generated additional savings. Today, the archives contain in excess of 14 million documents. Finally, within the group itself, the Actel website has already been converted to the Alfresco WCM platform and the ‘Web Access for P&V Agents’ project is currently in the process of being developed. This is a simple web browser that enables P&V agents to access their own reports and product descriptions.

“We are already discussing other ECM and WCM projects. Vivium is also looking at expanding its Alfresco system with web layout and studio capabilities. For us, the importance of our Alfresco implementation is not just limited to today's results. We made a conscious choice in opting for a solution that supports our vision and we look forward to the next stage in our cooperation,” concludes Mark Scheers.



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