Eneco

Using Process Automation to Keep Pace in a Rapidly Evolving Energy Landscape

Industry: Energy

Dutch energy provider Eneco is one of the largest players in the Netherlands and Belgium energy markets and ranks among the top 10% in the energy sector for its ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) practices. The Rotterdam-based company plans to become carbon neutral by 2035, not only in its own activities, but also in the energy it supplies to customers.

Situation

Back in 2018, Eneco was becoming aware of the changes in customer needs. The margin per customer was under pressure, and 'traditional' energy customer contracts were declining. Old business was receding, yet the company expected to enter new market segments.

One market segment Eneco targeted was smart homes. It was a timely decision to enter the segment because the smart home market was expected to reach almost 210 million units in Europe and grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14.94% from 2020–2025. Eneco planned to create added value for customers and develop new energy services, like smart home applications and IoT-based energy management.

One smart home device Eneco created was Toon, an intelligent thermostat that controls energy consumption and serves as the brain of a modern smart home. It comes free with a 4-year energy contract for Eneco customers; however, Toon is also sold as a standalone smart home.

With so many installations and a booming market, Eneco saw the opportunity to improve its end-to-end process of selling home thermostats. This would ultimately decrease its sales cycle length and enable the company to process orders faster.

Problem

Eneco was using a customized solution from 'contact center' to 'billing process,' all under one large application. Once an order was placed, several processes kicked in, starting from tracking customer data for each new order (beyond the normal gas/electricity billing details), to directing external supply chain partners for the delivery of Toon thermostat.

The company later deployed MS Dynamics CRM for the billing engine, making it difficult to automatically execute customer processes. Therefore, a key challenge was to orchestrate and automate the entire process and integrate the data with Dynamics CRM.

"*The first objective was to model the delivery process of the intelligent thermostat*", explains Joris de Been, Domain Architect at Eneco's Consumer Division. "*We already had a process in place, albeit a manual one, for requesting this thermostat. We wanted to automate this process and keep it internal to Eneco. We also wanted additional processes, so that the Eneco call agents could gain greater insight into the (statuses of the) orders.*"

"It was a tight-knit cooperation between the business and IT, namely between a team of developers, a process expert, a tester, and a business expert.

Paul Beumer | Technical Developer, Eneco.

agilepoint

Solution

Eneco chose AgilePoint as its Business Process Automation (BPA) engine and a fusion team was set up consisting of developers, a process expert, a tester, and a business expert.

The team modeled Toon's order management and delivery process in AgilePoint, and quickly configured the new app's integration with Dynamics CRM. The team leveraged AgilePoint's visual process modelling tool to work out process changes on a digital canvas instead of scrambling with code.

The newly created business process management engine simplified Eneco's work processes while, at the same time, allowed non-users of the Microsoft Dynamics CRM to gain insight into the processes. The created order and sales management process application also simplified IT's capability to ensure enterprise-level governance of the app through fine grained permission control at both application level as well as process level. IT further ensured that the Toon order management application had enterprise grade security controls.

Simultaneously, the overarching goal of increasing process automation and application development velocity was also achieved as process analysts and business experts were able to directly make needed changes to the application as and when needed, without compromising IT's governance protocols.

"Based on a concrete case—the delivery of the smart thermostat— we got down to business. The first important use case to work on was the delivery of the smart thermostat", says Paul Beumer, Technical Developer at Eneco.

"We sketched out the processes and modelled the steps. Through close collaboration, we reconstructed the complete delivery process in the AgilePoint platform. This collaboration between business and IT really worked. Today, it is easy for the business to determine where errors lie or where improvements are needed. It is not all hidden in the code—a big benefit."

"What works for the delivery of the smart thermostat can also work for other products or services, such as boiler maintenance application or customer facing apps like a chatbot that gives them access to online self-help".

Results

The delivery process of new Toon thermostats could now be clearly viewed by all involved in the booking and delivery of orders.

Call agents of Eneco used their AgilePoint dashboard to gain insights about order statuses, deliveries, and error tracking.

After the new application went live, Eneco scaled it to 15 million process instances within the first month.

Developers were able to build what the business will see. It became easy to model the processes with the business.

The call agents now have much more usable knowledge at-hand. At a glance, they know exactly where in the delivery process the smart thermostat is.

Bigger Out-of-the-Box

15 M	900+
Process instances managed through AgilePoint portal within the first month.	Workflow actions *[extendable by professional developers]*
15+	**95+**
Dynamic Process Patterns eliminating the need to model processes from scratch	Connectors to systems and cloud services