Standard Is a Strategic Choice

When André joined the company in April 2015, a choice in principle for 4PS and Microsoft had already been made after an extensive selection procedure: 'I whole-heartedly agreed. I particularly liked the combination of service and void management on the one hand and the renovation company, where they are also in the process of making the transition to 4PS, on the other hand. When you use the same system, it is easy to make all kinds of cross-connections as well.'

He considers standardisation a major benefit of the 4PS strategy: 'At Dura Vermeer, a lot of automation took place in house. This was in line with our tailor-made approach, but it also required huge investments in terms of time and money to keep up with all developments, which is impossible in the long run. From now on, we opt for standard; it is a strategic choice. Additionally, with the Microsoft platform on which 4PS Construct and the other applications run, continuity is guaranteed.'

Working Together

An inherent aspect of standardisation is that it never fully overlaps the working method adopted by individual parties: 'It sometimes compels you to adjust your processes. On the other hand, if major customers think that certain adjustments are needed, 4PS is prepared to listen and act accordingly. For instance, we want to work with a decision hierarchy that is rather more extensive than the one used in the Service and Maintenance solution. For us it is essential that we can send our engineers to our customers with the clearest assignment possible. We have provided the decision hierarchy, and they have integrated it with the solution. It is marvellous that we can go the process together – it is a real win-win partnership.'

Open mind

The implementation took almost half a year: 'This was quite a challenge, for you are trying to get information from an organisation that is still developing. Our core users had to anticipate a working method they had little insight into at the time. Meanwhile, their day-to-day operations had to continue as planned. I think they have all done this very well and with an open mind. Quite frankly, they have become the ambassadors of the product. The collaboration with 4PS was excellent, partly due to calling in an external project manager. The go-live date of 1 January 2016 was met without any big problems. We did have to set up some less relevant parts later on, however, but that is quite normal with this kind of project. Our organisation, too, has been very cooperative; on the whole, they were definitely open-minded.'

André de Keijzer, Director Dura Vermeer Vastgoed Service:

'The Difference Is Made at the Front-End'

Dura Vermeer has called in Dura Vermeer Vastgoed Service, a new service company that has been operational since 1 January 2016, for its service and void management. The processes have been newly set up with Microsoft Dynamics NAV 4PS Construct, with a key role for the Service and Maintenance solution. Director André de Keijzer explains the ambition underlying the creation of this new business unit and how the company-wide 4PS software provides proper control and support.

André de Keijzer previously worked at Ymere, the largest housing corporation in the Netherlands, where he was responsible for merging various smaller service units into a single large service company. This new challenge is comparable: 'The idea is that our service company, which has national coverage and an innovative automation system, can render optimum advice to our customers on the state and value of their property and thus reduce their maintenance costs sustainably. We position ourselves as a party for professional property managers all across the Netherlands, but we initially focus on the housing corporation market in the Randstad.'

Getting Started on the Front-End

With the effective deployment of 4PS Construct, mobile solutions and portals, the new service company has to succeed in considerably improving the information to the customers and the communication with them: 'We want to be able to follow the workflows closely, without any receipts or other data getting lost. We also want to be able to provide continuous and reliable feedback on what we do and comply with our obligations. In the past, we worked hard on the back-end of our processes. Now we are shifting our focus to the front-end. This is where the difference is made, so we will have to spend a lot of energy on the process.'

Competitive Advantage at Data Level

The priority is currently on setting up an automation system that supports the processes. This is only a first step: 'In the next step, we have to link our system and the client's system technically, since we want to be able to support them on the basis of the information provided, in a way that we can make the difference. With the investments we make we will never be able to compete with local contractors on prices. Our advantage will be at the level of data. On the basis of our data, we can perform maintenance per complex and do so more efficiently as a result.

Corrective will increasingly become preventive maintenance, which will lead to lower costs. This data also ensures that we can inform our clients specifically about maintenance, information they could use when preparing budgets for the next few years. This is added value a local party cannot provide either.'

Added Value

A preventive, complex-based approach has another major benefit in a more idealistic sense: 'Our engineers can enter any premises. They can identify issues that have nothing to do with maintenance: a filthy home, an elderly individual who is confused or neglects himself. Our engineers already have an opportunity to enter this information in a specific field. They do not use it themselves, but in this way the housing corporation receives information it would otherwise receive much later if at all. This is not our primary task, but it does give our work some important added social value – added value that is in line with a changing and wider view of relieving the client of any non-core activities.'

The office building of Dura Vermeer Vastgoed Service in Houten

'This application helps me doing my job'

Theo Merlijn is one of forty service engineers of the new service company. What does he think of 4PS Mobile, the mobile application they have started using in the field?
'I had always worked with another system, so it took some getting used to in the beginning. Now I can manage perfectly well. It is very user-friendly. You can also add photographs and other documents to the digital worksheet. In this way you get a better picture of what needs to be done and what material you need. The better the failure description, the more efficiently we can do our job. Once the digital list of materials has been completed, our job will be even faster: we will only need to click an item to enter it into the system – data, price and all. I also like the fact that I can enter things I notice during my visit – a home that has become very dirty, for instance – so that the housing corporation can take action.'

Theo Merlijn, Service Engineer at Dura Vermeer Vastgoed Service