

TVH becomes an agile, real-time enterprise with a service-oriented architecture.



CASE STUDY

CHALLENGE

TVH needed a flexible architecture to support its goal of becoming a real-time enterprise capable of reacting instantly to any changes in market dynamics.

SOLUTION

Progress OpenEdge® and Progress® Sonic ESB® were used to develop, manage and integrate a service-oriented architecture (SOA).

WHY PROGRESS® SOFTWARE

Progress offered the flexibility, scalability, extensibility and ease of use TVH needed to rapidly build high performance applications.

BENEFIT

Integration of data flow from subsidiaries in 18 countries and commercial activities in over 140 countries enables employees and customers to make strategic business decisions based on real-time information.

As the world's largest supplier of forklifts and forklift parts, TVH heavily relies on its ICT infrastructure for its online business model. With core processes that change all the time, being able to modify its applications on the fly is crucial to TVH's success.

“This is where our Progress technology comes into its own because it allows us to adapt those applications instantly and effortlessly,” says Kalman Tiboldi, ICT manager for TVH.

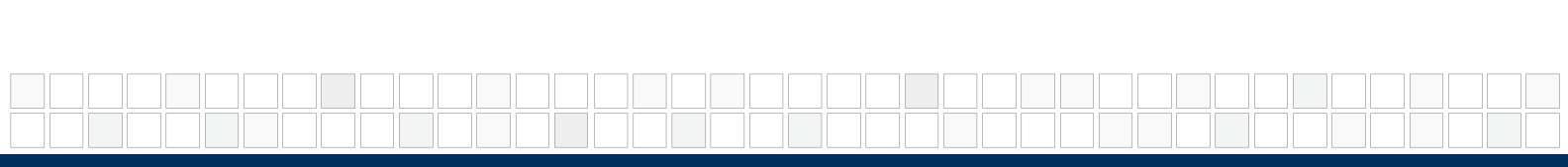
When TVH, formerly known as Thermote & Vanhalst, was created in 1971, it started by purchasing, reconditioning and selling old military lift trucks. Today, it is a global player in the forklift truck market, actively serving more than 17,000 customers in nearly 160 countries from a stock of 300,000 different parts.

Still very much a family business employing more than 1,200 people, it nevertheless boasts some of the most sophisticated ICT and logistics systems around. It is currently in the process of moving to new, highly advanced premises in Waregem in the northern part of Belgium. Here, Belgacom NSI has installed a completely new network integrating voice, data and video, plus monitoring and alarm systems, security cameras and warehouse scanning systems. And Cisco Systems is supplying a wireless network which, once up and running, will be Belgium's largest wireless voice and data network.

A REAL-TIME ENTERPRISE

“This new network was an absolute must,” says Karl Dorme, network and telecom manager for TVH. “Our database of over 8 million part numbers has to be accessible for our customers 24x7. They must be able check prices, stocks, orders, transport, delivery times, invoicing—you name it. And that means having a flawless ICT infrastructure with very flexible applications that can instantly adjust to new demands if and when needed.”

Kalman Tiboldi confirms this, “Very early on the Thermote and Vanhalst families understood that ICT is of strategic importance to a company such as TVH, that it can truly be a competitive asset if properly developed, maintained and used. Core to our business is the supply of up-to-date information. Technical and commercial data from all over the world have to be processed into meaningful information about the



competition, prices, products. As such, we use very specific, proprietary processes to run our business, to turn TVH into a real-time enterprise capable of reacting instantly to any changes in market dynamics. And that obviously requires an extremely flexible software architecture.”

TRULY “POWERED BY PROGRESS”

In that respect, Tiboldi is very outspoken: “Years ago we made the right choice to go for Progress as our development environment and our database. It has enabled us to develop a range of completely integrated applications, from supply and sales over logistics and customer relationship management to human resources—all built in-house and based on Progress technology. And best of all: totally platform independent—our development is done on Windows workstations, but our code runs under UNIX.”

TVH uses a host of Progress products. Apart from Progress OpenEdge for the database and business logic, it employs the Progress® OpenEdge® Application Server for middleware, the OpenEdge integrated platform for the development, Progress Sonic ESB for the service-oriented architecture (SOA), Progress® WebSpeed® for its interactive Web site, and OpenEdge WebClient for the e-commerce applications.

“And even the new automation projects at our new site in Waregem will literally be ‘Powered by Progress’,” says Tiboldi. “But undoubtedly the most important benefit of using Progress is the fact that it allows us to react immediately to any change in demand, be it from our own employees or from suppliers or customers. We do live in a continuously changing environment where change is the only constant, and therefore we always try and anticipate any new trends to stay ahead of the competition.”

A STRATEGIC ASSET

TVH has no fixed IT budget—“but that does not mean that the sky is the limit,” Tiboldi explains. “If an investment can be justified, then we have no problem to getting the necessary funds from management. The growth of our IT team is a perfect illustration of that down-to-earth approach: five or six years ago the IT staff consisted of just four people, now there are 22 in Belgium and more than 30 worldwide. And although we have decided to implement the same architecture and applications in our sites all over the world, it is again the power of the Progress technology that allows us to run and maintain such a huge infrastructure with a limited number of people.”

According to Tiboldi, TVH was way ahead of its time in recognizing that IT is no longer an expenditure but a strategic asset that really serves the business.

“That is why our ICT staff cooperates very intensely with the various departments, to understand exactly what their current and future needs are and how we can respond to them. You see, there is no way a service and distribution company today could survive with a static application—this is a real-time enterprise with both internally and externally oriented applications that have to be adjusted to new market impulses all the time.”

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— Kalman Tiboldi
ICT Manager

THROUGH THE WEB

One of those customer oriented applications is TVH Quick Source, a WebClient application which currently has been installed in more than 80 countries. Already back in 1994, TVH decided to use the Internet for e-commerce purposes, and currently more than half of TVH's commercial activities go through the Web.

"Therefore it is of the utmost importance that we are able to master and modify our proper software processes," Tiboldi emphasizes. "When we started to develop the new planning system for our new site in Waregem, we set up a procedure to invite requests for change from our employees because it is their expertise and creativity that drive the business. In the first quarter of this year alone we received more than 1200 such requests, pushing us to constantly improve the application—with the help of Progress OpenEdge!"

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ABOUT PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation (Nasdaq: PRGS) provides application infrastructure software for the development, deployment, integration and management of business applications. Our goal is to maximize the benefits of information technology while minimizing its complexity and total cost of ownership.

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