Control Risks Group

Building more robust processes and better data governance with a suite of IBM software

Overview

The need

To boost revenues, Control Risks Group must seize opportunities at key points during its subscription sales cycle – but fragmented processes made it difficult to keep track of when to contact clients.

The solution

By combining business process management, integration and master data management tools, Control Risks Group built automated processes for managing trial subscriptions, new sales and renewals.

The benefit

The subscriptions team now has complete visibility of the sales cycle, with clear, highly automated workflows – increasing productivity and almost eliminating the risk of missing an opportunity to sell.
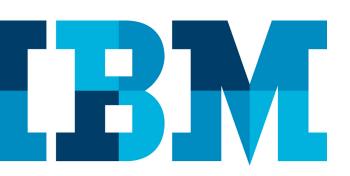
Control Risks Group is an independent global risk consultancy that specialises in helping organisations manage political, reputational and security risks in complex and hostile environments. The company operates in more than 100 countries, has 34 offices worldwide and employs over 2,000 people.

A significant portion of Control Risks Group's revenue is generated by its subscription services, which provide clients with information and advice on geo-political risks in different countries, and access to a 24/7 global helpline in case a high-risk situation emerges.

The company's subscriptions team is responsible for managing these services. The sales cycle typically involves encouraging prospective clients to sign up for a free trial subscription, constantly monitoring the progress of the trial, then moving them to a full service and reminding them to renew or upgrade their subscription when it is due to expire.

Yuriy Skopets, Enterprise Data Architect for Control Risks Group, explains: "Trials, new sales and renewals are the three main points when our subscriptions team can lock in revenue, as well as cross-selling and up-selling our services. It's vital not to miss these opportunities."

The subscriptions team has been the first beneficiary of the new solution, but Control Risks Group sees its wider potential. "Business process management, master data management and integration give us a powerful toolset that could ultimately help us enhance almost every area of our business," says Yuriy Skopets, Enterprise Data Architect, Control Risks Group.

Solution components

Software
- IBM® Business Process Manager
- IBM InfoSphere® Master Data Management
- IBM WebSphere® Cast Iron®

IBM Business Partner
- Entity
- SAFIRA

However, with subscription-related data held in several disconnected systems and governed by a completely manual set of processes, it was difficult for the subscriptions team to keep track of when to contact their clients and prospects. The team wanted to find a better solution.

Finding the safest path forward

"The subscriptions team initially asked us to develop a database or application to help them manage their data, but as we looked at the problem, we realised that this would only provide a small portion of what we really needed," says Yuriy Skopets. "That's when we started looking at business process management."

The company was already working with IBM on a project that involved the management and integration of its employee and customer data with HR, CRM, ERP and other key systems, and to introduce master data management technology to link up its customer and employee data-sets across all these systems – so it was a natural step to investigate IBM's business process management offerings too.

"We were pleased to find that IBM® Business Process Manager was well respected by IT analysts, and we liked the idea of having a single software supplier for all three capabilities: integration, master data management and business process management," comments Yuriy Skopets. "After a good proof-of-concept and a very competitive commercial offer, IBM won the tender."

Overcoming challenges through partnership

Working with SAFIRA, an IBM Business Partner that specialises in business process management implementations, Control Risks Group built a highly sophisticated set of automated workflows to govern the subscription team's trials, new sales and renewals processes.

"It was a challenging project because the requirements were highly complex, but we were successful for two reasons," says Yuriy Skopets. "First, the support from SAFIRA was outstanding, and we would recommend them to any organisation that wants to do this kind of implementation.

"Second, the IBM Business Process Manager solution is very quick to develop, which meant we were able to maintain a high level of engagement with the business users all the way through the project. If something didn't work properly or they wanted an improvement, we could respond very quickly and show them the impact of their change request. This was absolutely vital in overcoming some of the challenges and scope-changes we faced during the project."

"Our new subscription process is just the beginning – ultimately we will see improved efficiency and data governance in many areas of the business."

— Yuriy Skopets, Enterprise Data Architect, Control Risks Group

Making users' lives easier with automation

The subscriptions team now has full visibility of where its prospects and customers are in the sales cycle, and clear, automated workflows that make it easy to take the right actions at the right times. When each user logs into his or her Microsoft SharePoint dashboard, they can immediately see the information that is relevant to them, and the tasks they need to complete.

When a key point in the sales cycle is reached – for example, when a customer reaches the end of their trial period and decides to sign up for a full subscription – the solution automatically reads and updates data in the relevant systems, and prompts the team to input more information where necessary. Because the whole workflow is controlled and managed from end to end, the risk of missing an opportunity or taking the wrong action has been virtually eliminated.

"The feedback from the users has been overwhelmingly positive, because we have given them a set of tools that they use every day, and that make a huge difference to the way they work," says Yuriy Skopets. "The best testament to the way the project has been received is that we have already been given the green light from management to start two more projects to introduce business process management into other areas of the business."

Leveraging master data management and integration

One of the key next steps will be to link up the business process management solution with the master data management and integration tools, which will combine to provide an extremely powerful platform for managing data and processes across all the company's most important systems.

"With help from Entity, another highly skilled IBM Business Partner, we will soon be going live with our first master data management and integration project," says Yuriy Skopets. "This will enable the creation of a 'gold version' of our employee data across all our systems. Working in the risk management industry, it's vital for us to have a 360-degree view of who our employees are and what they are working on. We are also working on a similar project that will do the same for our customer data."

He adds: "The Entity consultants are real specialists in information management, and their support has been excellent throughout the engagement. As a partner for a master data management initiative, they are definitely the first people I would call."

Integrating systems for a single view of data

The IBM InfoSphere® Master Data Management and IBM WebSphere® Cast Iron® solutions will also support another important initiative – the company's forthcoming upgrade to a cloud-based version of Microsoft Dynamics CRM.

"We will need to keep our old CRM system running for compliance purposes, even when the new cloud solution is operational," says Yuriy Skopets. "Integration and master data management will allow us to match customer records in both systems, and provide a single view across the entire history of each customer."

Looking towards long-term benefits

Yuriy Skopets concludes: "In the longer term, the really exciting benefits will arise when we can use all three solutions together. For example, we're planning to develop an end-to-end process for onboarding new employees, which will automatically populate employee records in all our systems and save a huge amount of manual work. Once we have the tools in place, it is hard to imagine an area of the business that won't be able to benefit from them."

For more information

To learn more about IBM business process management solutions, contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website:
ibm.com/software/products/en/category/bpm-software

To learn more about business process management consultancy from SAFIRA, please visit www.safira.pt

To learn more about information management solutions from Entity Group, please visit: www.entity.co.uk

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