SEPARATE REALITY

One size fits all – perfectly.

How we navigated legacy systems, language barriers and internal politics to deliver a best-in-class Electronic Bill Presentment and Payment (EBPP) solution for Vodafone in partnership with Oracle Consultancy.

With Vodafone Group on board, a worldwide delivery team, lots of travel, different cultures, delicate politics, rigid product boundaries, tight deadlines, and tough problems, this project was just the kind of huge challenge we like to get our teeth into.

Here's how we turned it into huge results…

How it all began

Oracle had supplied Vodafone Group with a number of Oracle eBilling 6 licenses and these had been distributed to local Operational Companies - OpCo's - throughout EMEA. Each OpCo was then faced with the choice of either using the solution out-of-the-box, or customising it in line with local needs at a further cost (and ensuring the customised solution didn't require expensive future maintenance).

In addition, Vodafone Group was also using Oracle UK Consultancy for services, and had partnered with Infosys in India to look after project delivery.

Where we came in

We were brought in by Oracle UK Consultancy to provide specialist integration and solution architecture services. It involved spending up to 3 weeks at a time working onsite with individual OpCo teams in Ireland, the Czech Republic, Turkey, Portugal and more, alongside consultants from both Oracle and Infosys, and engineers from individual billing system suppliers.

Our primary focus was on extracting a huge amount of data from current billing systems, re-formatting it, then importing it into the new eBilling 6 product. The new system was deployed as a strictly 'black box' product and therefore adopted the in-built business processes as best-of-breed. It delivered a brand new global strategic direction for Vodafone's eBilling systems which wasn't necessarily in-line with the immediate local requirements or the way they did things at the moment. This meant it was important for us to manage expectations and navigate delicate internal politics as a key part of the project.

A single solution for all involved

Perhaps the biggest challenge we overcame involved pulling data from different billing systems (each OpCo had their own) using the same software engine. Externalized configuration was the key, where each OpCo would have a bespoke configuration but the engine that processed it would be the same for all. This would keep lifetime costs low and enable people with basic knowledge of spreadsheets to manage the data imports.

Our first class knowledge of UML and some rapid, overnight prototyping meant that we were able to successfully deliver a solution that worked with huge volumes of data at outstanding speeds - as well as work through a number of language barriers that led to some rather odd conversations.

Ultimately, the project was a huge success and we developed some very useful techniques, tools and methodologies along the way.

But as always, it was the client who realised the biggest benefit. Vodafone's new EBPP solution gave them a single turn-key solution that allowed their customers across EMEA to view their bills online and drill into them in whatever detail they required, all with a familiar brand aware look and feel.

Not only did it generate huge savings by delivering paperless bills with a low lifetime management cost, it also delivered clear and valuable customer-focused messages around transparency and ease of access which led to increased customer loyalty and reinforced the global brand identity.

Not to mention fewer calls to their call centres...