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Renovating while staying open for business

Oracle APEX for the IT company of the Ministry of Defence

Jan Willem Janse is product owner of the OMIS development team at JIVC: the IT company of the Ministry of Defence. OMIS stands for Operational Management Information System and is the operational planning and reporting system of the Royal Netherlands Air Force. Two and a half years ago, a large-scale modernization project was started, using APEX to replace Oracle Forms and Reports. While the renovation was ongoing, OMIS had to keep working continuously.

JAN WILLEM JANSE
Product Owner at JIVC: the IT company of the Ministry of Defence.

The planning system of the Royal Netherlands Air Force was originally built with Oracle Forms and Reports. Jan Willem explains: "Forms is out of date. This was an important reason to start the modernization process. Mobile access was also a challenge. We wanted to retain the database, continue to work with the same tables, and reuse as much of the existing software (stored procedures) as possible."

Moving from Forms to APEX
APEX shares many similarities with Forms. Jan Willem: "These similarities make the transition easier. But enough interesting technical challenges remain. For example, we had to reinvent many old functionalities together with the users. Such as the auto refresh mechanism. This mechanism updates and highlights changes to the data shown on a screen in real-time, when other users make changes to that data. Or if two people are changing the same mission simultaneously. If this happens, then the changes shouldn't conflict.

At the time, this was built into Forms, in part through Java customization. We had to invent these key functionalities in a new technical way in APEX. When that worked out, it was very satisfying."

Ready for the future
Jan Willem continues: "We want the system to work on all devices. We therefore prefer to build a perfect and responsive website rather than an app. The application must operate entirely in the browser, based on modern web standards. This way, we can also provide mobile access to OMIS later. It is ready for the future."

A lot of expertise
The project is fully agile with two scrum teams. Jan Willem: "APEX development teams are well suited to working according to scrum methods. The OMIS team consists of a project leader, product owner, functional administrators and eight APEX developers. The complexity of the project requires a high level of knowledge and expertise of the APEX developers. We also expect this high level of our hired IT professionals."

A good balance
OMIS has many different users. Jan Willem: "I am the intermediary between the development team and the users. I'm constantly looking for the balance between what is desired and what is possible. This is quite a challenging task with so many different users. For example, every airbase has its own culture and customs. Each of them has a different desired screen display. And there are other system users, such as parts of the army."

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It makes the job even more challenging for Jan Willem and his team. "All flights of the Royal Air Force, among other things, are planned in OMIS. In addition, the system is completely attuned to exercises. The renovation shouldn't inconvenience anyone. That is why we are

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working hard to minimize downtime. The agreement is a monthly release cycle with a maximum of 2 hours downtime per month.

We are renovating while staying open for business. Rack by rack. As a result, we are renewing parts of the system in phases. And we are shutting down environments in phases. A numbers of user groups is already working with the modernized APEX screens. Others are still using the old screens.

For instance, OMIS modules are also being modernized in phases. User groups are able to use more and more modules in the modernized APEX application. Components of the old system are gradually being shut down. This is a significant advantage, because the underlying database remains largely the same. And that's great."

A pleasant collaboration
Qualogy is one of the Ministry of Defence's partners for hiring APEX specialists. Jan Willem: "Wouter de Waard, APEX consultant, was hired through Qualogy. He is flexible and has the knowledge level that we strive for. JIVC stimulates sharing knowledge. For example, we regularly organize knowledge sessions for team members, by team members. Wouter likes to share his knowledge there too."

More information
Would you like more information about the possibilities of Oracle APEX for your organization? Contact Leon de Werker, our Qualogy Applications business unit manager at 070 319 5000 or **sales@qualogy.com**.

About Jan Willen Janse

Jan Willem Janse is product owner of the OMIS team at JIVC: the IT company of the Ministry of Defence. JIVC is part of the Defence Materiel Organisation (DMO). Jan Willem has a background in IT, including working at Oracle. He has worked for the Ministry of Defence for over 15 years and has been involved with the OMIS system for many years. As a result, he has acquired a great deal of functional knowledge which he combines with his technical IT background in his current role as product owner.

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