

Royal Van Wijhe Verf

LOW-CODE SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT FOR A COLOR MIXING SYSTEM



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Royal Van Wijhe Verf is a Dutch family business and one of the major players in the decorative paints market. Late last year it became evident that the capabilities of the existing color mixing system, and by extension the color management system, were making it increasingly difficult to meet a changing demand. After the sales department had to turn down yet another opportunity, the company began actively looking for ways to modernize both systems and make them futureproof. After drawing up detailed specifications and an evaluation of 3 selected potential IT partners, they opted for OVSoftware. Together with the internal project team, they will be developing a new color management system using the Thinkwise low-code platform.

This is the first of three documents covering the different phases of the project. We will speak with three employees of Van Wijhe Verf during the evaluation process at the start of the project in March, during the development in May and at the completion in July. Each of them are involved in this project from their own specific discipline. Eric van Meerten - Sales Manager, Arjan Mulder - Business Process Manager and Rik Koelma - Senior Technical Specialist play a leading role in the internal Project Team for the development of the new system.

A LARGE VAT OF VARIABLES

As a family business, Van Wijhe Verf is a successful player in a sector that is dominated by international, listed companies. Innovation and sustainability are important pillars supporting the continuity of the company. Eric: "In terms of scale, we cannot compete with the big boys, so we have made it our mission to do things differently. Van Wijhe Verf is one of the few paint companies that creates its own colors, using a technique that we designed ourselves. With this technology we also provide other paint manufacturers with tailored tinting systems so that they can also tint their paints correctly using our color pastes. The color management system that we use to manage this process was developed by a clever IT developer who would add new products whenever we asked him to. At the time this worked fine. However, we are pioneers in the field of tinting systems and 'machine sharing' is a recent example of an innovative concept that we have developed. This involves processing as many brands of paint as possible on one mixing machine, which has resulted in massive growth of the database of types of paints and consequently of color formulas. We have also considerably expanded our customer base of external paint manufacturers in the last few years. As a result, the number of variables has become so large that the system is about to explode. Last but not least, we no longer want to be dependent on a single person to make adjustments to the system. In fact, it should be so intuitive and user-friendly that our color mixers will be able to work with the system themselves.

FLEXIBILITY AND PROGRESSIVE INSIGHT

Arjan: "In effect, we are a victim of our own success: the demand for our products and services is greater than we can manage at the moment. The new color management system needs to be more manageable, contain more functionality and be able to facilitate an endless number of combinations. This means that flexibility is key, and that starts with the requirements and the creation of the software itself. Eric not only has to be able to work with the system today, but also in a year from now and well beyond. It is impossible to anticipate everything he will need to do so. The system must be able to adapt to progressive insight. In the past you could only write program code line by line, today there is such a thing as low-code where you can drag and drop an application together, as it were. Sounds very simple, but you want to do this using a low-code platform that is capable of handling the job and with a partner that has the expertise to do it."

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OVSoftware

CONFIDENCE AND A PERSONAL CONNECTION

After an initial request for a quotation to three vendors and a demonstration of the plans, OVSoftware was selected as the winning IT partner. Arjan: “In everything they did they demonstrated that they understood us and that they know what we want. It is very clear that the IT professionals at OVSoftware possess the required knowledge and experience: they know exactly what we have to be aware of and they come up with suggestions and ideas that we would never have thought of ourselves. Furthermore, the personal contact was very pleasant. The same applies to the people from Thinkwise, the low-code platform that we are going to use. They have demonstrated to us that with this platform and this approach we will have all the flexibility we want and that we can develop a system that will enable us to manage the growing demand, both now and in the future. Innovation is of the highest priority for OVSoftware and Thinkwise, and cooperation plays a very important role for both companies. It is a bit like a marriage: you enter into a close partnership with each other, but it will not always be plain sailing. You must be able to completely trust each other and know that together you can reach the finishing line. This is the case with OVSoftware and Thinkwise.”

EXPECTATIONS

Rik: “I was not previously aware of low-code or agile development; that is not how we worked within our company. The first eye opener came during the agile workshop that was given by OVSoftware prior to the start of the project. We were asked to draw a house for someone. However, new requirements were added as we were doing this. It became abundantly clear that the foundation should not be too rigid, because then there is absolutely no room to maneuver later. And this is exactly what we want to avoid with the new system. This is my biggest challenge: setting priorities and ensuring that we develop the functionality that will make the greatest contribution to the business, without setting things in stone. Delivering a system that my colleagues can easily work with and that they find easy to use, is also a key criterion for me. The choice of a modular design of the color recipes and by performing some of the calculations later in the process, we can create more flexibility at the start of the process. This allows us to better satisfy the (greater) demand and (future) expectations. This project suits me perfectly: it is not really IT, but it is very close. And it is something completely new! It’s a busy and intensive time, but since I was involved in the design of this system myself, it’s especially rewarding when you also get to help bring it to life.”

Arjan: “Rik is the specialist in the lab and the link to the IT professionals of OVSoftware. He knows how the processes currently operate and understands Eric’s requirements better than anyone. I hope during sprint 1 to see the first contours of a much simpler, intuitive system. Personally, I am quite curious about the reaction from other project members, and whether they will be just as positively surprised as we were, that with this approach we have been able to achieve so much in such a short time.”

Eric: “This entire IT experience is new for me. I have got a good feeling about both OVSoftware and Thinkwise during the past months, but it will be very exciting to see what the first sprint produces. That will show whether they have understood our needs and whether we are on the right path. What can the IT professionals produce with each sprint? What new requirements will appear and how are we going to include them? Ultimately, I hope to have a system that is much better suited to our needs, but above all is very easy to work with.”

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OVSoftware

OVSOFTWARE EN THINKWISE

Thinkwise is the only vendor in the world that provides a low-code software platform that enables the realization of large-scale and complex business software. The Thinkwise platform offers the highest productivity in the low-code market while also ensuring that no new legacy is created. The resulting business software automatically adapts to future technologies. In addition, existing legacy software can be rapidly modernized with the Thinkwise platform by using the built-in "Upcyclor" technology. Thinkwise licenses its platform to companies with in-house software development and to software vendors. Thinkwise was founded in 2002 and the platform is used in over 42 countries. More information: www.thinkwisesoftware.com.

At OVSoftware we are very strong in designing, creating, managing and maintaining custom software for central government and the business community. We have also been seconding the best ICT-specialists for almost 50 years, including .NET and Java developers. Our employees help companies and organizations to successfully apply innovative technologies in practice (e.g. Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Internet of Things, industry 4.0). Through years of cooperation with customers in the financial services, manufacturing industry, education, government and transportation, we know these sectors like no other.

If you want to know more about qualitative and reliable custom software, you are faced with an IT challenge, you can use help or you are looking for a job where you can deal with seriously complex IT-issues? Then visit our website www.ovsoftware.nl, or contact one of our offices near you:

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