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Positive digital flow

Inetum-Realdolmen takes GZA emergency planning to the next level with Power App

If the coronavirus crisis has taught us anything, it's that a well-thought-out and dynamic emergency plan is an absolute necessity. This is true for businesses and governments – and especially for hospitals and other critical care facilities. The healthcare group GZA was able to take its emergency planning to the next level with the help of ICT partner Inetum-Realdolmen and the Microsoft Power Platform.

With roots that stretch back to the 13th century, GZA is considered an established boon in the Antwerp healthcare landscape. The group manages three hospitals with about 1,000 beds and 11 residential care centers. Across its three campuses, GZA Ziekenhuizen employ 4,000 people, including about 1,000 nurses and 400 doctors. "And let's not forget the numerous employees in our support services, such as hotel services, ICT and many other committed teams," says Jan Witters. As Director of Process, Quality & Innovation, he co-manages several strategic projects aimed at improving day-to-day operations within the group. "We contacted Inetum-Realdolmen to help us here. As part of these projects, we also continue to work very closely with our network partner in the region, ZNA Ziekenhuizen."

From static and analog...

One of our strategic processes that appeared to have room for improvement was the way GZA initiated and managed emergency plans. "It used to be very static," says Filip Vandevelde, who is the head nurse in the emergency department as well as the emergency plan coordinator. "But a crisis is actually very dynamic."

Emergency planning used to be a completely analog process with crisis team members using something simple like an eraser board to get the best possible picture of the emergency. That emergency planning always took place each time at a fixed meeting location. "All the same, we always had a backup just in case the fixed conference room was not available," explains Filip Vandevelde. "But all crisis team members had to attend as standard. Although we present ourselves at the moment as one hospital, in practice we actually work in three different campuses. Of course, if one of the team had to come from another campus, it could lose valuable time."

Finally, a report was also drawn up of the emergency planning. But just like the eraser boards, the report was not available in real time. "This meant that a single common picture of an emergency was not always available within the organization. And, of course, that's a crucial precondition for properly addressing an emergency whether it's a fire, ICT system disruption or pandemic."

... to dynamic and digital

The project with Inetum-Realdolmen was intended to ensure that Filip Vandevelde and other crisis team members can smoothly and quickly form a single common picture of an emergency that they can share in real time. "That way, everyone is instantly aware of the emergency and how to handle it, no matter what campus they are on."

"The idea to develop an app originated in the GZA innovation think tank," explains Filip Vandevelde. "The think tank had been working with Inetum-Realdolmen for some time to come up with innovative solutions to digitize and automate our processes." So, once again, GZA decided to collaborate with their trusted ICT partner. "Inetum-Realdolmen first listened carefully to our needs. The company's specialists carefully mapped out the underlying processes and streamlined them as much as possible. They then delivered a demo version of the app based on that analysis. Using that foundation, we worked together to build the final Power App that currently allows us to swap out the old analog, static crisis management for a more dynamic digital approach."

To develop the app, GZA and Inetum-Realdolmen used the Microsoft Power Platform. This is a user-friendly, low-code development environment that even users with relatively little technical experience can get going quickly. Besides this ease-of-use, the Microsoft Power Platform also allows for flexible development completely tailored to GZA's needs. "The use of low-code was a recommendation from Inetum-Realdolmen," explains Filip Vandevelde. "We already had experience using and developing Power Apps within our organization, which

made it all the more easier to work with. That is a huge asset, especially in crisis situations. So, by definition, things have to move fast, and simplicity is even more of an advantage than usual."

Digital cure-all

For Filip Vandevelde, the new app already offers two important benefits. "First and foremost, the communication and cooperation between all members of our crisis team are now much more efficient and faster. This also allows us to inform the other stakeholders in a crisis more quickly, and to deal with the crisis itself much more rapidly. Moreover, the app allows us to automatically generate a report afterwards with a simple click of a button. We use this as a basis for evaluating our operation faster, identify bottlenecks more quickly and immediately assign concrete improvement measures to those bottlenecks."

"What's great about these types of solutions is that they help us improve our daily operations," says Jan Witters. "This allows us to spend more time with our patients. Digitization is quite often a cure-all for freeing up time for the things that really matter. So, in the coming months, we will look at whether and how we can also use this solution to digitize other processes in our organization."

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About GZA : www.gzaziekenhuizen.be
About Inetum-Realdolmen: www.realdolmen.com