The dream of WoCo Innovations becomes reality

Thanks to a partnership with Blueriq

blueriq

The Challenge of WoCo innovations

A collaboration that benefits both parties and demonstrates the (commercial) viability of a partnership. That's how WoCo Innovations from Breda and Blueriq describe the development of 'Antwoord op maat' a customer-oriented software solution for housing corporations, built on Blueriq's platform. WoCo Innovations about Blueriq: "Your platform helps us realize our vision, our dream." Blueriq about WoCo Innovations: "Your input helps us stay ahead of market dynamics."

WoCo Innovations provides software that enables housing corporations to make their services more customer-oriented. Founders Marco van Grootel and Rolf Klaar met while developing a software product for a large housing corporation in the Randstad region.

About six years ago, they decided to continue developing the product independently. To do so, they founded WoCo Innovations, and their solution became Antwoord op maat. "What binds Marco and me," Rolf explains, "is our vision: putting the customer at the center. A tenant isn't interested in a housing corporation's general story. They only want to know: what does this mean for my situation? The information and knowledge within an organization must therefore be made specific to that customer, in that situation, and within that context. That requires a complete shift in the foundation of all IT systems."

Because those systems, Marco adds, are based on the logic of the organization itself, with departments such as Collections, Maintenance, and Finance, for example. And they are built on business-oriented principles that lead to back offices with the most specialized employees and front offices with generalists. They are not based on customer inquiries Antwoord op maat is.

Marco: "We understand the challenges housing corporations face very well. Society and politics are putting them under pressure to improve their services to their customers often vulnerable tenants. Knowledge from the back office needs to be brought to the front line. Handling 80 percent of questions over the phone and giving the same answer in every comparable situation that was the challenge."

Direction by WoCo Innovations

That challenge led to renewed contact with Blueriq. Rolf, a former Blueriq employee, explains: "What we were looking for was a partner with a platform capable of capturing an organization's knowledge and business rules, combining them with customer-specific information about a particular situation, and then automatically generating a decision. If you can achieve that, even an employee who isn't an expert can apply the business rules. So essentially, we were looking for Blueriq's proposition."

> ## "We were looking for a platform that could handle business rules and customer-specific situations. In essence, we were looking for Blueriq's proposition."

Rolf Klaar

FOUNDER WOCO INNOVATIONS

"That's exactly what Blueriq excels at and what makes us unique," confirms Roel van de Steeg, Senior Customer Success Manager at Blueriq. "Our platform allows clients to capture their business rules and lets the system perform the reasoning that leads to a decision.
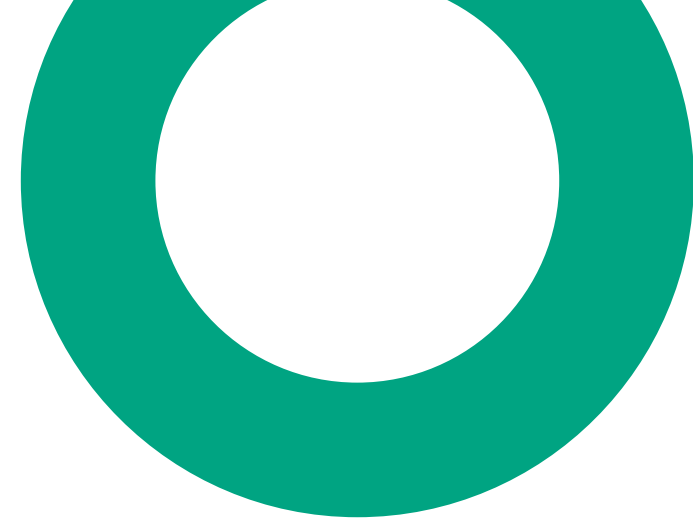
"Our software already contains many building blocks, such as a decision tree. All the logic needed for that is included in the package. The only thing the client needs to do is add their own business logic."

The contact led to an agreement with a different type of collaboration than Blueriq had been used to: a partnership. Whereas Blueriq had previously developed solutions for clients and provided expert services, it now enabled the partner to build the solution themselves using the Blueriq platform. The direction was now in the hands of WoCo Innovations.

The reason for this approach, Roel explains, was that Blueriq wanted to expand into other markets. "At that time, we were mainly active in the finance market, but our product is also very suitable for other markets. We wanted to serve those markets, partly through a collaboration with WoCo Innovations."

Antwoord op Maat (Tailored Answer)

'Antwoord op Maat' is a knowledge system for housing corporations, containing all the information needed to support customer interactions. The system includes variables derived from the policies and process agreements of the respective housing corporation.

'Antwoord op Maat' is built using Blueriq software. This software operates based on business rules: policies and process agreements are "tested" through an on-screen dialogue and compared with the data from the customer profile. Work order registrations and payment arrangements are also processed from the solution into the underlying systems. 'Antwoord op Maat' can be integrated with any software system used within housing corporations.

50.000

Housing units
(via affiliated housing
corporations)

€250.000

Revenue

10

Number of
employees
(partly flexible)

An organic process

Both parties describe the development and collaboration process as "very natural, organic." Rolf says, "We quickly agreed on a business model that allowed both of us to make money. But we didn't make formal agreements about deadlines, for example."

Marco adds, "We could have purchased a standalone software package, but Blueriq is not just a product. It's also a company with consultants who have the knowledge and experience to build solutions. Blueriq invested time and people in us. We were guided by experienced consultants who know how to assemble the right components using the building blocks of the Blueriq platform."

During development, intermediate results were sometimes "thrown in the trash." Marco explains, "In the beginning, we made a few assumptions that turned out to be wrong. We made things much harder for ourselves than necessary. Essentially, we made the mistake of reasoning from a back-office perspective instead of from the customer's perspective."

Rolf adds, "That actually sharpened our approach and gave us many insights. Because we had chosen a solid foundational structure, we were able to implement changes quickly and efficiently."

Simultaneous product development on one side and market development on the other led to a launch in 2017 for a client: a housing corporation in the eastern part of the country, formed from the merger of several smaller corporations. Rolf says, "They were looking for exactly what we had created."

Ties tightened again

During the refinement of the software solution and the exploration of the market, Blueriq was hardly involved. That was handled by WoCo Innovations. When WoCo Innovations gained a client two years ago, the ties were strengthened again.

Marco: "Creating a product for a single client is relatively straightforward. It becomes more challenging with a second client. Then your product not only has to serve that second client but also continue to support the first one properly. At that point, Blueriq helped us think about how to make a clear distinction between what is standard and what is specific to one housing corporation or another."

Rolf notes with satisfaction that *Antwoord op maat* has now reached a level of "maturity" that allows it to handle additional clients. "To put it bluntly: we no longer need Blueriq's experts for that."

> "**Blueriq contributed ideas on how to create a clear distinction between what is standard and what is specific to one housing corporation or another."**

Marco van Grootel
OPRICHTER WOCO INNOVATIONS

New possibilities

That doesn't mean the collaboration has ended. Periodically, Rolf explains, it is necessary to assess whether Blueriq's platform, which is continuously evolving, continues to run smoothly for WoCo Innovations. More importantly, he emphasizes, is to explore what opportunities that development offers their business.

Rolf cites the use of voice technology as an example. "We used business rules to develop an intelligent dialogue via a computer screen or tablet. When Google and Apple introduced voice technology, we wanted to make it possible for 'Antwoord op maat' as well." This was achievable with Blueriq's technology — and quickly. Marco adds, "In January, Google's voice functionality was available in Dutch, and by April we had already adopted it in 'Antwoord op maat'."

Roel explains that Blueriq was at that time developing a "home journey" based on voice for the financial market. "You see a house for sale and want to know if you can afford it. You ask that question verbally to…"

an app, and you receive an answer via Blueriq's logic. The same technology was also well suited for housing corporations."

WoCo Innovations also contributes to the development of the Blueriq platform by actively participating in webinars, where Blueriq gathers feedback and ideas from clients. Roel emphasizes that Blueriq is a generic platform. "We don't build specific features for a single client. So we want to know what the generic needs of the market are and which priorities we should set. In making those decisions, the input from WoCo Innovations is very helpful to us."

An example of such a generic need is more options for presenting information. Rolf says, "Now that people increasingly want their questions answered via social media instead of calling a customer service center, you also need to be able to manage the look and feel of those answers. Blueriq has supported this insufficiently so far. We highlighted its importance, and Blueriq has added it to their roadmap."

Possibilities for the future

Starting as software for housing corporations, WoCo Innovations is now also exploring the possibilities of using Antwoord op maat — or parts of it — in "adjacent markets," such as real estate companies. They are also investigating whether it can be used by (sub)contractors.

Rolf: "The latter increasingly handle the front office for maintenance and repairs. The construction sector has a lot of catching up to do; it's a market with very little digitalization." Marco: "A product like ours can give a contractor a competitive advantage because it quickly and effectively supports the request and execution of a repair."

Blueriq will not only continue to provide input on the technology for these potential expansions, Roel explains. "If WoCo Innovations grows, they may get so much work that our solution team can provide ongoing support and thereby further strengthen the partnership."

Both parties agree that the collaboration so far demonstrates that partnerships are very much possible not only in the housing corporation market but in others as well. Rolf concludes: "You've given us the opportunity to realize our vision, our dream, and I think that's really awesome."

"If WoCo Innovations continues to grow, we can strengthen the partnership even further."

Roel van de Steeg

SENIOR CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER

blueriq

Contact information

De Gruyter Fabriek
Veemarktkade 8 (Entrance K, Office
7120) 5222 AE 's Hertogenbosch

marketing@blueriq.com
(073) 645 04 60

Roel van de Steeg
r.van.de.steeg@blueriq.com
+31 6 29 52 76 11