TRANSFORMING INSURANCE THROUGH DIGITALISATION

Marco Peyer
Head of Business Process
Management at Swiss Re

A Swiss Re and Fincons Group case study

Swiss Re is a leading wholesale provider of reinsurance, insurance and other insurance-based forms of risk transfer. The company deals both directly with their clients and through brokers. Swiss Re's client base consists of insurance companies, mid-to-large size corporations as well as public sector clients.

By 2013 the business had grown to such an extent across 35 countries that a new Business Process Management (BPM) solution was required. The firm's vision was to embark on a multi-year project to implement a business process management platform for its core business, to make processes more efficient, more agile and adaptable to cope with client needs and market changes.

"For this project we were looking for a boutique style partner, so not an overly huge company, but a company which was specialised and flexible enough to adapt to the way we work and the needs of our business. It was also important for us that any company we partnered with are experienced in leveraging new technologies such as Cloud and Mobile. There was another particular aspect to the BPM project: there is a strong focus on optimizing the actual business process, which requires a profound understanding of the business we're doing and model the BPM platform. We were not looking for generalists, but for software engineers who quickly grasp our business and deliver solutions with a great user experience" explained Marco Peyer, Head of Business Process Management at Swiss Re.

Fincons Group, the international digital consulting company, were just the right fit due to the versatility of their offering. "What appealed to us was the flexibility and their responsiveness in the whole on-boarding phase. Fincons continued to spend a lot of time with our internal resources which is a key aspect for us; the closer people get to the business, the better they understand its needs. In this aspect Fincons were fully embedded in our development process." Mr Peyer continued.

The BPM platform developed now orchestrates the company's business processes from an end to end perspective. Going forward it will pre-empt the user's needs by making suggestions about what is the next best action, or logical step to take and thus allow Client Managers and Underwriters to focus on client relationship management, product and solution development and ultimately decision-making rather than clerical work.

As mentioned by Mr Peyer: "The solution provides a great deal of transparency into who is doing what, where we are at with our deal portfolio. It also provides a great overview for managers to steer the workload of their team and identify early-on bottlenecks in our client offering process. Ultimately this enables us to get back to our clients in shorter time with less administrative burden."

Fincons Group is now an integral part of the Swiss Re IT capabilities. They did not just provide a monolithic solution but rather implemented an eco space of components which were bespoke to Swiss Re, meeting their unique requirements. Fincons in fact, do not merely provide a product, but design and implement scalable and customisable solutions.

The smart-shore method offered by Fincons Group is another key aspect which proved appealing to Swiss Re as it provides the desired flexibility, is competitive from an economical standpoint and provides the required skills and mind-set to be successful.

In addition to this Mr Peyer highlights further value for money: "Fincons provides us with cultural and physical proximity cost-effectively. On another note, having the right mind-set is key: we find the smart-shore team are well-trained and are highly motivated people. Fincons Group understands our priorities and continuously adapts according to those. They are well embedded in our organisation and processes which is why I have been also sharing our experiences with colleagues in other areas of our company".

Mr Peyer concludes: "Fincons anticipates our needs for continuous changes and also to rally the right people enabling both parties to navigate the ambiguity that the future holds. Together with Fincons Group we are working on modern solutions for the (re) insurance industry and as we navigate through ambiguity and market challenges, as long as Fincons Group remain flexible and responsive to our changing needs, then I believe our strong partnership will continue to flourish".

Swiss Re is a prime example of how Fincons Group is enabling an international insurance company in its digitalisation journey. Can you tell us a bit about what Fincons brings to the UK insurance market?

Fincons Group has been active in the Italian market for more than 30 years. Early on, management understood the importance of expanding the business internationally, and opened a key site in Switzerland 20 years ago. Since then, the Group has expanded to grasp business opportunities in the UK and the US. The Financial Services Business Unit (representing more than 40% of the Group's total revenues), and the insurance team in particular are expanding internationally. We regard our partnership with Swiss Re as a best-practice example of how we can help companies with our functional, technical and methodological skills.

Our technological skills are continuously updated thanks to our Innovation department which trials new technologies (such as Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and machine learning), as well as scouting the market for cutting-edge solutions to establish win-win partnerships. Our skills, together with the Smart Shore Delivery Centre based in Italy, enables us to provide solid, innovative and pragmatic solutions, ensuring excellent quality at a reasonable price.

What type of benefits can digital transformation bring to insurers?

Insurers need to provide apps and mobile sites, as modern consumers have come to expect these from all types of businesses. Traditionally UX (user experience) design has been the domain of B2C solutions, but it is now playing a more and more important role in applications designed for brokers and agents; the driver is the need to provide appealing tools to sales people, also because sales activities are more and more commonly performed on-the-go, and physically side-by-side the final customer, who will benefit from access to a tidy, modern and efficient front end platform.

But is the technology currently available to UK insurers able to support this type of interaction?

At the moment customer information is usually housed in back-end legacy systems and tends to be 'siloed' in different formats for the use of single departments. The first step is to garner an understanding of whether these systems are able to support digitalisation or whether they require

Giuliano Altamura
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re-engineering, re-platforming or even replacement. With the help of experienced system integrators and with the aid of Big Data technologies, it is possible to develop a new multichannel front-end layer, integrated in real-time with data drawn from different sources.

Giuliano, tell us a bit about Fincons' Smart-Shore model. What benefits does this carry for clients?

Fincons developed its Smart-shore model to find the perfect balance between quality and costs for its clients. The model is based on the goal of providing a mixed team, including more senior professionals working at client's premises, and the delivery team, located remotely at our Delivery Centre based in Bari in Southern Italy. This model is widely used by our Insurance sector clients, which means our Delivery Center doesn't just have a significant level of technical specialization, but also functional and industry skills that lead to an even higher level of efficiency.

About Fincons Group
With over 30 years of experience in IT Business Consulting, Fincons Group delivers customised end-to-end software solutions to different industries. The Group has offices in London, New York, Los Angeles, Bern, Zurich, Lugano, Milan, Verona, Rome, Bari, Catania. www.finconsgroup.com