

CASE STUDY

Back Office of an Agency AC¹ and DC² (C=LTC)

The Back Office of a Translation & Localization Agency is not easy (in this business nothing is easy...).

HCR – Informática e Traduções, Lda, is a Portuguese Agency created in 1984, whose main business activity is *Software localization and Technical Translations* to other Agencies in Europe and USA and direct clients in Portugal, with a total of 300 active clients.

Our turnover is around US\$ 1Million.

We have 15 in-house translators and localizers, 2 Project Managers, 2 administrative staff, 2 MCSE Engineers and we work with 30-40 freelancers in the European market, chosen from a database of 320 suppliers.

Our workload per day is as follows:

1. N° of projects per day	8
2. N° of invoices/NC/ND per day	5
3. N° of CV's received per day	2
4. N° of Purchase Orders to suppliers per day	10

BACK OFFICE AC (C=LTC)

Before we installed **LTC**, 2 years ago, our back office system consisted of a variety of databases (MS Access) not integrated, complemented with MS Excel spreadsheets which were connected with some databases to maintain all the financial calculations, MS Project to have an idea who is doing what for which deadline, with some Word documents, full of macros, to communicate with suppliers and clients and MS Outlook email transport, all of that finishing in a invoice program developed in VBA.(nice stuff!...)

1. **Databases** – there were 7 databases for Clients, Suppliers, Projects, Proposals, Translation Tools, Price Lists and Financial Documents (Invoices, Credit Notes, Debit Notes and Receipts). These databases were more or less communicating with each other, developed in Access at different times. Lack of consistency and overlaps gave us great problems in terms of engineering and management time spent not only to maintain and administer the databases but also in new developments needed for the daily work.
2. **Spreadsheets** – some of the reports, particularly the financial calculations were difficult in databases and we had to develop import/export macros to paste data from databases to spreadsheets and do the calculations to re-import the results into the databases. For instance Purchase Orders were made in spreadsheets, mainly because of the fuzzy calculations, and after that connected with the projects themselves, in a rough way.

¹ AC: Ante Christum (here it means: before introducing LTC Organiser)

² DC: After introducing LTC Organiser

3. **MS Project** – was used mainly to maintain a schedule of Projects, Suppliers, control of delays, all of that importing data from databases and spreadsheets using VBA. We still use MS Project for big projects, because the workflow is complicated and this tool is adaptable to different kind of projects.
4. **Word documents** – macros for sending QA documents to suppliers and clients, faxes and other documentation (CV'S, etc) was also used in our back office, complemented with VBA developments.
5. **MS Outlook** – used as an email program not connected with the other applications where we attached any documents manually, because we didn't have time to develop these connections.

Result: *Even if this business is stress oriented, our own stress was "zoomed in" because:*

- *We didn't have time/resources for new developments (our core business is not that),*
- *The time spent on administrative tasks was stressful and costly, demanding new resources,*
- *The percentage of errors due to several data origins was amazing,*
- *We couldn't give information to clients, suppliers and management at due dates, and*
- *last but not the least, nobody was happy with the system...*

BACK OFFICE DC (C=LTC)

One day, someone said "**Enough!**" and after analyzing several packages in the market, some of them oriented to translation business and others not, we decided to use the LTC Organiser, developed by The Language Technology Centre Ltd in the UK.

WHY?

Because all the little/big problems we had disappeared as magic! Let's explain that:

1. **Databases – integrated**, open, ACCESS and SQL availability, adapted to our business, easily changed and personalized, gave us **Heaven** in terms of consistency, maintenance, development, stress and ... our errors (sins...) were forgiven!
2. **Spreadsheets – disappear** in seconds and gave us the tranquility of mathematical and financial ignorance!
3. **MS Project** – even if used to big projects, **95%** of the other projects are managed with the Project Scheduler of LTC
4. **Word documents – gone**, using extensively Crystal Reports, we can maintain dozens of reports, forms, documentation, what ever in a crystal clear way....
5. **MS Outlook** – even if used as an email transport, LTC allows to maintain all **communications** between suppliers and clients, with the WEB Supplier and Client Modules, that uses WEB access between the agency and their third parties involved, in a much easier way!

Result: *Even if this business is still stress oriented, our own stress was "zoomed out" because:*

- *No more complicated developments, only little adjustments and extensive use of Crystal Reports,*
- *The PM's now are responsible for the full workflow, from Proposal to Invoicing, from within an integrated environment, without duplicating data and spending considerable less time,*
- *Percentage of errors = 0 trend!*
- *all the information for all team members or project participants is on line, updated and accessible via WEB,*
- *people are happy, THANKS LTC and GOD, of course!*

Try it, it's really good!

JOÃO RUIVO, HCR Managing Partner, joaoruvo@hcr.pt, phone +351213139650