# iGrafx®

iGrafx Helps UCB Improve Operations in Mission-Critical Projects

How Business Process Management & Automation Transformed the Business

About UCB

Back in 2019, UCB embarked on a transformation journey. As a multinational pharmaceutical company with €6.5-6.7B in revenue and 9,000+ employees, their business is inherently complex. But their mission is simple: allow everyone to live their best life by providing critical treatments for those suffering from neurological and autoimmune disorders.

The Challenge

To provide those treatments, it was paramount that UCB could unravel the complexities of their supply chain, ensuring that the process of procuring the base elements needed for their medicine was efficient. A crucial facet of this project was ensuring that their master data was always accurate. And that meant re-architecting their processes and upgrading their automation solution from the SharePoint Workflow Engine.

The Business Process Management (BPM) Domain Lead, Andreas Rockenhaeuser, was tapped for the assignment. His team was given 18 months to model processes in the BPMN standard, check for efficiency, remove redundancies, and set up new business logic for roughly 40 different process workflows running through SharePoint at the time. These processes weren't simple either, with many having multiple levels of associated sub-processes. UCB selected iGrafx to discover the reality of their existing processes, design ideal versions, and ultimately optimize them through automation.

As if there wasn't enough pressure, UCB had a new drug that they had to release on a certain date, and failure to complete the project in the allotted time would have huge consequences for the business. Each day that the drug was off the market would cost the business roughly 1M EUR and expose them to a compounding amount of market and reputational risk.

Soon into the project, UCB ran into more bad news: Microsoft was sunsetting the SharePoint Workflow Engine. The 18-month timeframe shrunk to 7 months. The clock started ticking. Andreas' team acted as a de facto Center of Excellence, set up a workstream model with the different process owners, and were off to the races in 3 weeks.

The Solution

Driving Transformation: Process Improvement & Automation

It started with Andreas' team, a small but mighty group of 3. Fortunately, they had executive sponsorship supporting their transformation, allowing them to recruit additional people on a project basis.

Due to the success with the initial transformation project and resulting organic word of mouth growth, they quickly had other departments asking for their help.

To support their growth, they created a governance council to oversee all projects. This council was supported by a team of process designers and process collaborators from various business units. They created an "automation workbench" for employees to submit automation ideas, where they could be analyzed, prioritized, and implemented.
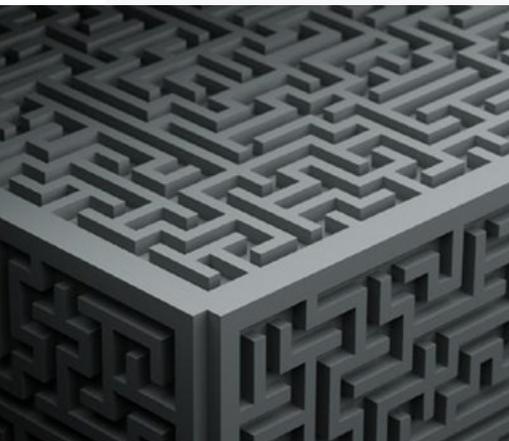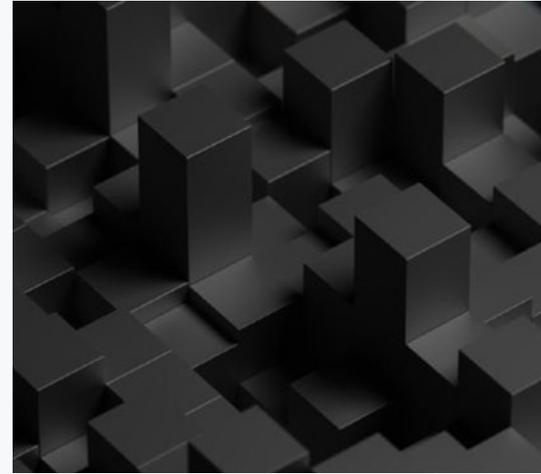
UCB used iGrafx in a number of ways to execute on the projects coming from various teams. They started with iGrafx process design capabilities to model and document their processes in a standardized BPMN format, which provided the basis for improvement and rollout of automation.

Some of these processes were incredibly complex, initiating up to 8 sub-processes that needed to be completed in parallel before the process could finish.
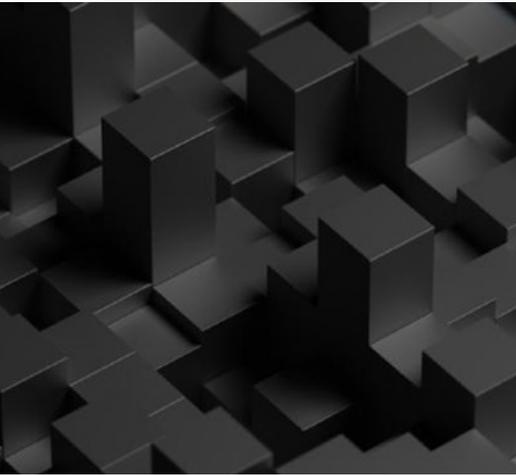
To support the actual process execution, UCB leveraged iGrafx to orchestrate traditional bots, AI bots, workflows, and employees to optimally complete a process. For example, as users were going through the process and doing things like placing orders related to the supply chain, they would fill out Smart Forms.

These forms provided the input parameters to iGrafx automation, which would assign the right people to the right tasks, and conditionally kick off and run the required sub-processes.

The automation was integrated with source systems like ERPs to be able to dynamically react to different process instances, especially important to UCB because of the lack of process standardization inherent with developing specialized medicines.

Process performance and health information was easily surfaced across processes through a set of reports and dashboards. The information was also exposed via API so that it could be added to existing Qlik Sense dashboards where needed.

At a lower level, task dashboards were added for users to manage their day-to-day operations, and so that the greater team could easily re-assign work in case of sick leave, turnover, or other unforeseen changes.
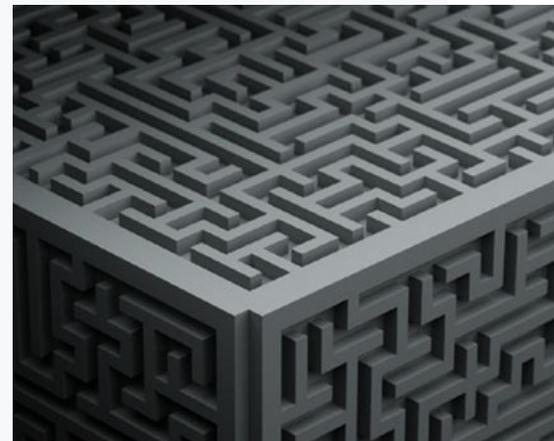
The Results

Reimagining Business Process Management

The team hit their target, getting most core processes re-engineered, documented, tested, and migrated by the deadline. As the saying goes, "no good deed goes unpunished", this was just Wave 1 of many transformation projects to come.

Today, UCB is on Wave 4 of that transformation journey, expanding the scope of master data management for the supply chain, as well as other areas like clinical data flows, and documentation & learning.

The results have been impressive. As of 2023, they had 500 process collaborators (internal and external) using iGrafx across 50 different processes, producing an annual cost savings of 120 person-days while still preventing the financial and reputational risk associated with delays. Their processes are also more agile, for instance making it easier to quickly assign tasks to someone else if someone goes on sick leave.

Summary

UCB delivered a massive transformation project related to master data management for their supply chain. It was expected to take 18 months but was completed in only 7. This prevented massive financial and reputational damage. The success secured buy-in for expanding the remit of their BPM program, which now serves over 500 users and covers many departments.

They achieved this by using iGrafx process modeling, repository, and automation capabilities, which now stand as global standards for their IT organization.