



VOLUMETRIC BUILDING COMPANIES

USES COMPUTEC CLOUD BASED ON MICROSOFT AZURE

An interview with Jan Szary, IT Manager for Volumetric Building Companies (VBC)





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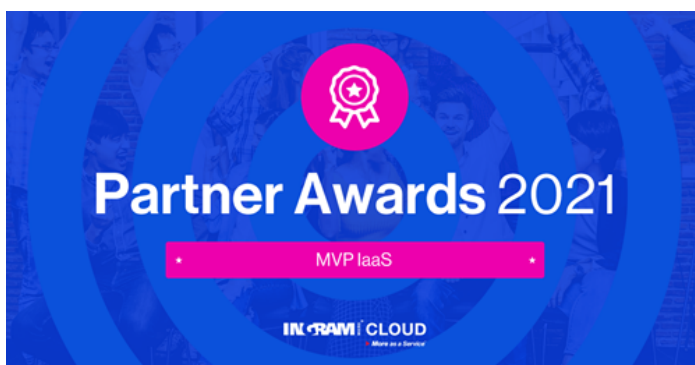
An award winning cloud ERP project



In 2021, VBC (Volumetric Building Companies), then trading as Polcom Modular, was a finalist in the SAP Quality Awards in the Central and Eastern Europe region for their innovative cloud-based implementations of SAP Business One and the CompuTec Solution Suite.



Computer World magazine awarded VBC, as Polcom Modular, 2nd place in their Best in Cloud competition distinguishing the SME in a lineup made up of large household name corporations.



CompuTec was named MVP in the IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service) category by Ingram Micro Cloud for their pioneering work on the VBC project and provision of Cloud Services.

HOW IT STARTED

Can you describe your company's activities in a few words?

VBC is a recognised market leader in the production of high-quality modular buildings and interiors. Our primary offering is hotels and residential buildings although we do also handle other types of projects as well.

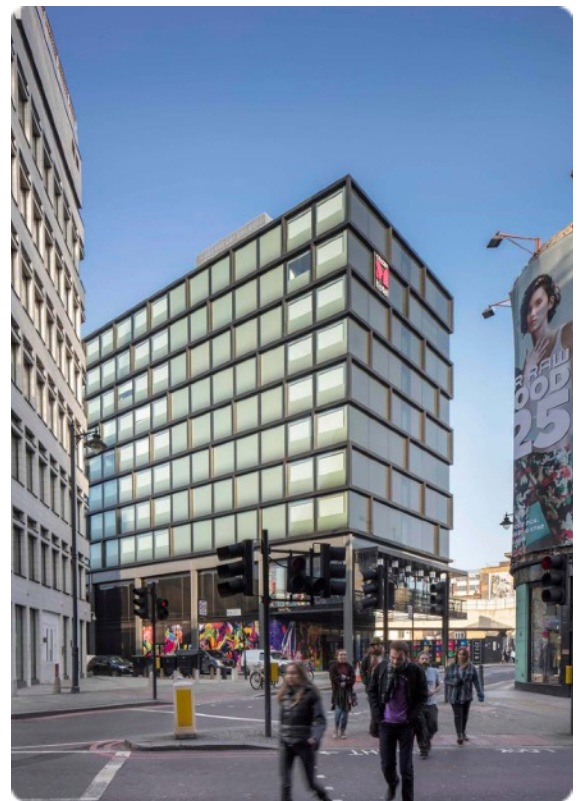
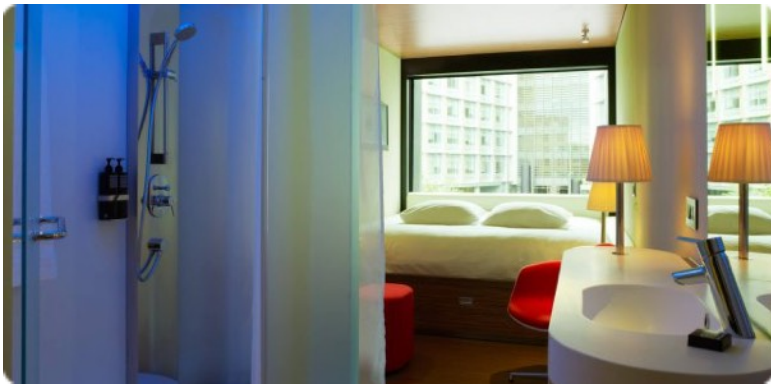
What strategic goals did you set yourself before embarking on this project?

The company was taken over by an investment fund and new owners were and are very ambitious about increasing the scale of the company's operations globally. This required business process improvements and IT solutions to support these goals.

One of our key criteria was we wanted to implement our system on a public cloud. CompuTec proposed exactly that. They suggested SAP Business One run hosted in CompuTec Cloud which operates in Microsoft Azure public cloud.



NEEDS ANALYSIS



How did you go about defining your requirements?

We started to “collect” details about our requirements and document the processes we needed the system to support long before we chose the ERP software that we would use. We hired an internal ERP team to lead this process inside the organisation. The ERP team, representatives of key business areas and substantive experts from within VBC we all involved in planning and organising the project. We only started the process of choosing the right system after we had mapped key processes. After some thorough market research, we chose SAP Business One run on SAP HANA. It was crucial for us to choose the right solution for our growing organisation and to find an integrated solution that would support the planning and measurement of our production processes. When it comes to our technical requirements, the availability of cloud technology was a prerequisite. In order to provide scalable IT and business solutions that would be available from anywhere, we wanted our system to be 100% cloud-based. This was non-negotiable. We chose the CompuTec Cloud service based on Microsoft Azure because it met all of our requirements.

We also decided that we prefer to buy the ERP system as a service which is why we chose the SaaS model. This drastically reduced the need for a large number of in-house IT staff as we no longer had to maintain and administrate our servers and softer ourselves.



To what extent do you use the standard software offered by SAP and Microsoft?

As a fairly dynamic company, we were able to be flexible enough in our processes to largely align with the standard features of SAP Business One and CompuTec Cloud based on Microsoft Azure. However, we also added a number of extensions that CompuTec offered us to accommodate our production processes and our warehouse operations. We implemented CompuTec ProcessForce, a solution for advanced manufacturing and CompuTec PDC (Plant Data Capture) kiosks for recording activities in the production hall. In the warehouse, we adopted CompuTec WMS for use on mobile devices and CompuTec Labels to manage the labelling of our inventory. Because we chose a cloud-based deployment, our printers and handheld terminals had to be hosted on a different server from SAP Business One but this didn't pose a problem because CompuTec also provided us with CompuTec AppEngine which allows all the different elements to communicate with each other. These solutions have all led to fundamental improvements throughout the company by facilitating and accelerating the work of our warehouse operatives and the employees involved in all three production facilities.

IMPLEMENTATION

How did you optimise the costs of implementation?

Thanks to the decision to deploy our system in CompuTec Cloud based on Microsoft Azure, we didn't incur any additional costs for infrastructure at all. We have production facilities in three separate locations but a cloud-based environment also meant that we could avoid the expense of having to centralise production to a single location yet still enjoy effective collaboration between all three sites. Because of purchasing our software in the SaaS model, we also avoided high upfront costs associated with license purchases. Instead, we pay monthly fees which is easier for us to manage from a financial and business development perspective.

How did you optimize the implementation time?

Without a doubt, a huge advantage of SAP Business One in the cloud was extremely fast system availability. We did not have to worry about the installation processes, updates, etc. The system was made available to us almost as soon as we had signed the contract. As a result, we were able to focus on configuring the system in line with our business processes which we had mapped out earlier.



What was the scope of the implementation project?

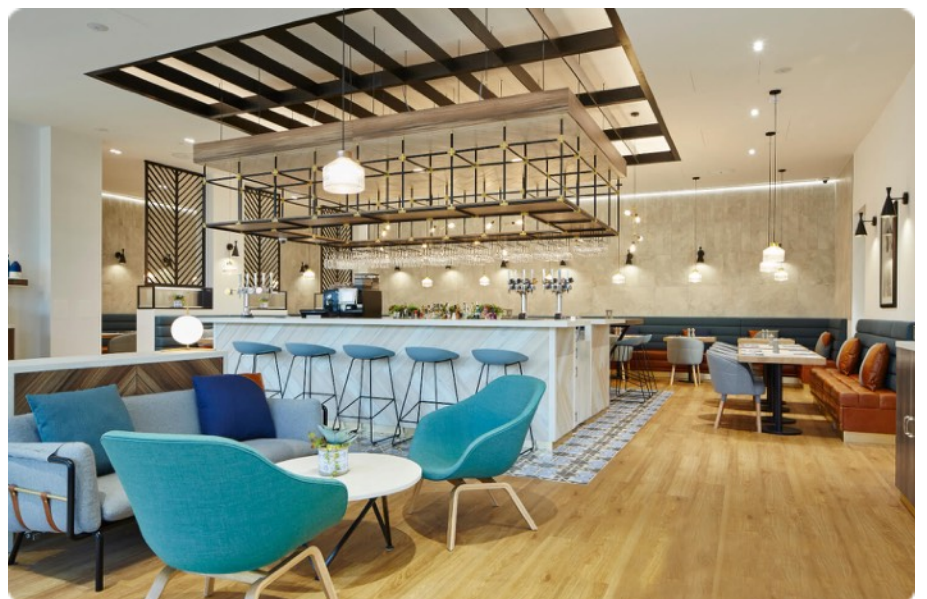


VBC did not have an integrated system to support our basic business processes. We determined that an ERP system running in the public cloud was a necessity to support the company's development and optimise production and our supply chain. After a careful selection process, we chose SAP Business One HANA with CompuTec S.A. as our implementation partner.

They offered us an implementation with public cloud deployment in Microsoft Azure. The scope of the project included the areas of Production, Warehouse Management, Logistics, Purchasing, Sales, Finance, Technology and General Business Data.

How was the implementation project billed?

During needs analysis, we identified and described over 150 tasks. All of them were tracked in CompuTec's reporting system and were fully described with workload and deadlines. Each task, after successfully passing the quality testing process, was marked as completed and closed in the reporting system by CompuTec. All closed tasks were summarized at the end of the month and we were billed accordingly. All project tasks were accounted for on this basis.



What was the implementation process like? Did it require a lot of commitment from your team?

We started off by recruiting an internal ERP team. We employed specialists in ERP implementations with expertise in production, purchasing, storage and finance. The core ERP team was supplemented with thematic experts (on an ad hoc basis from within the organisation) and area owners (part-time). When we felt we were ready and chose SAP Business One, the project team was supplemented with implementation specialists from our SAP Business One partner, CompuTec. The CompuTec team was present and involved throughout the duration of the project. They assisted us in evaluating all new ideas and concepts, presenting us with advantages and disadvantages and proposing appropriate solutions. They were readily available to support our in-house ERP team, almost around the clock.



Which methodology was used to ensure a high-quality implementation?

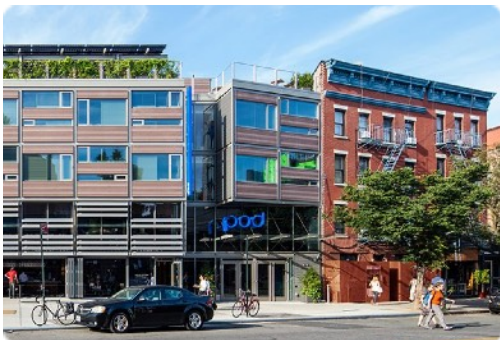
We took a hybrid approach, a mix of classic Waterfall project management methodology and the agile approach. The main milestones were defined according to the waterfall model. In each stage, there were 5 to 30 tasks that were registered in the contractor's reporting system, which helped us estimate the duration and deadlines. Communication via CompuTec's reporting platform, coupled with weekly project status meetings, helped us stay on track and respond quickly to any red flags.

How did you identify and manage risk during the project?

In the early stages of the project, we defined an impact / resistance to change / risk matrix that was regularly updated by the project manager. Significant risks were escalated to the Steering Committee.

VBC is a forward-thinking organisation that is very open to new ideas and solutions. Consequently, we were not particularly attached to established processes. We often created processes from scratch and therefore sometimes made quite ambitious decisions based on hypothetical realities. There was of course some risk involved, but also some benefits, as we were able to respond more flexibly to challenges, and our ingrained processes did not place any limitations on achieving our ambitions.

We successfully minimised risk by making sure our in-house ERP team comprised experienced and competent employees, and by selecting an SAP Business One partner with a long track record of successful implementations. The combination of knowledge and practical experience of both teams certainly helped us avoid many pitfalls and wrong turns.



How did your cooperation with CompuTec work and project management model did you choose?

The team responsible for the project put in a solid performance from start to finish. It turned out to that the internal ERP team and the CompuTec team were the right fit for each other. The project team had the authority to define the planned processes, then were given final approval by the respective stakeholders. Budget, benefits and all milestones were approved by the Steering Committee.

Our project manager was responsible for ensuring a high level of motivation in his team, organising concept sessions and arranging work that was carried out by individual departments, as well as providing appropriate training for everyone.



CONCLUSION

How innovative was the project as a whole?

From our point of view, the main innovation was the deployment of SAP Business One in the cloud on the SaaS model, which is still quite an innovative approach in the construction and engineering industry. We also used CompuTec AppEngine to improve our cloud-based environment and it also enabled us to use specialised plugins to support production. Thanks to our innovative, 100% Microsoft Azure cloud-based environment, we took part in the Best in Cloud competition organised by Computer World. We took on the largest Polish companies to see who uses cloud technologies in the most innovative way to develop their business.

<https://www.computerworld.pl/konferencja/bestincloud>

Would you recommend Microsoft Azure to other businesses?

Yes, absolutely. Now, with the benefit of hindsight and many months of production work on Microsoft Azure cloud, we know that we made the right choice. The service is stable, always available and in no way limits our ambitious plans for the company's development.





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Uses CompuTec Cloud based on Microsoft Azure

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