

The Company

Qatar Liquefied Gas Company Limited is a world-class leader in the extraction and processing of natural gas.

The Challenge

An update to their current workflow schema was necessary to have a more effective back-office operation. Twenty four processes needed to be automated and the system needed to be fully integrated with SAP.

The Solution

Netways proposed a robust .NET workflow system called Workflow from Captaris along with Netways own Workflow Accelerators, Custom Actions, and solutions workbench.

The Benefits

Tedious work has been moved to a web-based paperless system that saves time and effort. Resource requirements were reduced allowing Qatar-Gas to have an impressive 30% cost savings.

Qatar Gas Automates Business Travel and Project Timesheet Processes – Project Summary Document

Overview

Qatar Liquefied Gas Company Limited is a world-class leader in the extraction and processing of natural gas. Operating on-shore facilities, Qatar-Gas markets and exports natural gas extracted from the North Field, considered by some as one of the largest fields in the world.

Because of its rapid development, administrative functions at Qatar-Gas where not able to scale effectively to meet growth demands. An update to their current workflow infrastructure was necessary in order to have a more effective back-office operation. Transparency, accountability, reporting, and efficiency were the qualities that twenty-four internal business processes where to adhere to. In addition, the implemented workflow system had to be fully integrated with already existing complex applications including SAP.

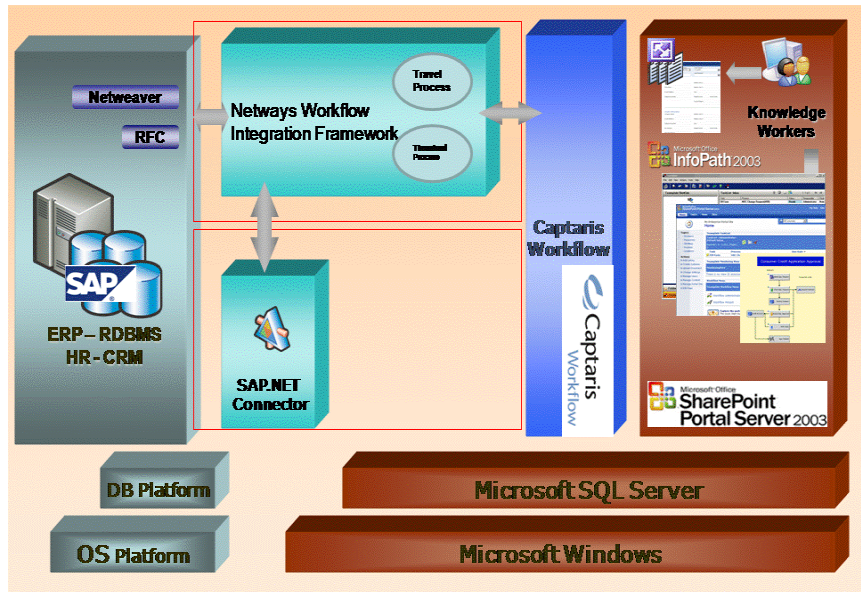
To implement the solution, Qatar-Gas chose Netways due to our experience with workflow solutions and more specifically with business processes related to the Oil and Gas industry. Netways proposed a robust .NET workflow system called Workflow from Captaris along with Netways own Workflow Accelerators, Custom Actions, and solutions workbench developed on Windows Workflow Foundation. Using the combination of Software Lifecycle Development and Project Management Institute principles, Netways developed the business processes models, applied quality assurance following Six Sigma standards, and placed the workflow models into production in record time. Within a short four-month period Qatar-Gas was able to put into production twenty-four enterprise level workflows, beating all expectations. Critical business functions, from reservations to stock reports, which were causing significant operational delays, became exceptionally faster as measured by tracked Key Performance Indicators. Tedious work has been moved to a web-based paperless systems that save time and effort.. The solution was highly scalable and could rapidly accommodate growth without having the need for an escalation of administrative resources. Double-booking errors were eliminated and inventory items for projects were secured removing project delays on job-sites.

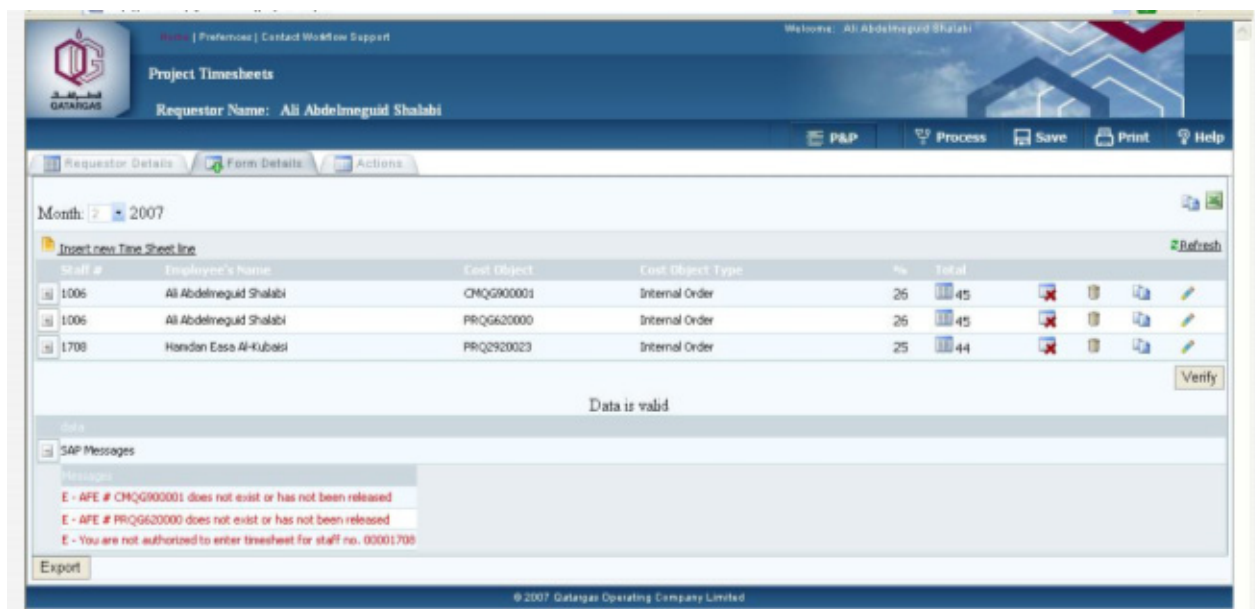


Technical Solution

Qatargas had already selected key Microsoft technologies including Microsoft SharePoint Server 2003 and the latest Microsoft operating system. Captaris Workflow complemented their Microsoft software packages because it is pure .NET architecture and direct integration with Microsoft SharePoint. Similar to what we see in medium to large O&G companies, Qatargas was using SAP as the main ERP, CRM, HR and RDBMS. SAP was an integral part of the solution since the two hundred processes that Qatar-gas are planning to automate would need to retrieve or post data from or to SAP.

Understanding the end goal of Qatargas which is automating almost two hundred processes and that many of the processes would have common traits like Audit Trail, History Track, Notification, Integration with SAP and other basic workflow requirements where all a key factors for Qatargas to adopt Netways Workflow Integration Framework. Netways provided Qatar-Gas with a cutting edge technology framework on top of which business processes may be designed, implemented, and maintained. The unique workflow integration layer consolidates the common workflow functionality specific to Qatar-Gas environment at the same time generic for all their workflows. This resulted in accelerating the development of workflows even more-so than strictly using a packaged workflow engine. The Qatar-Gas Workflow Integration Framework also provided exposure to SAP-Workflow web services while keeping the underneath integration layer abstract.

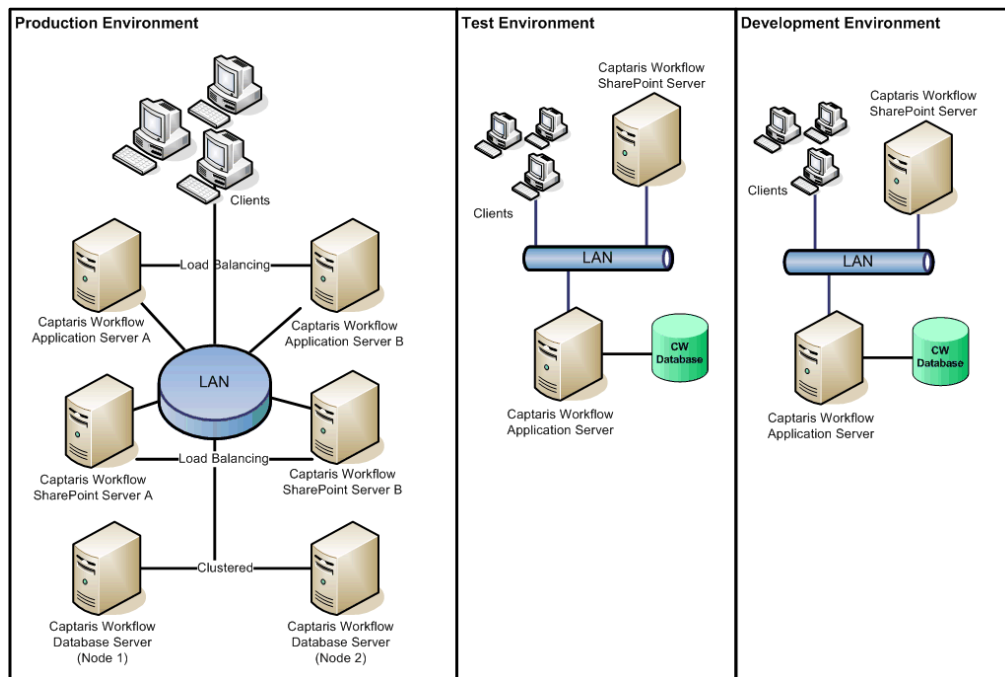




Some processes that are being automated on Netways Framework are internal business processes such as leave requests, purchase orders, business travel, project timesheet, e-services, and more. Microsoft SharePoint Server is used as the workflow interface. For example, users access e-Services forms within MS SharePoint and once they submit the form it triggers a workflow process. MOSS 2007 will also be used as a base for Dashboards and Reporting. Qatar-gas are upgrading to the latest MOSS 2007, this gives us exposure to the new features of this platform such as Excel Services. Captaris Workflow provides an OLAP cube with all KPIs and data required for reporting. Qatar-gas will utilize the advanced reporting functionalities of Excel Services on MOSS 2007 platform to enable agile decision making processes.

Deployment Overview

Qatargas workflow solution should support 2500 users and any downtime in the system would cause Qatargas serious losses in time, productivity and dollars. For that reason Netways recommended the deployment architecture to consist of a 3-tier environment. These are the Development Environment, Test Environment and Production Environment as shown below:



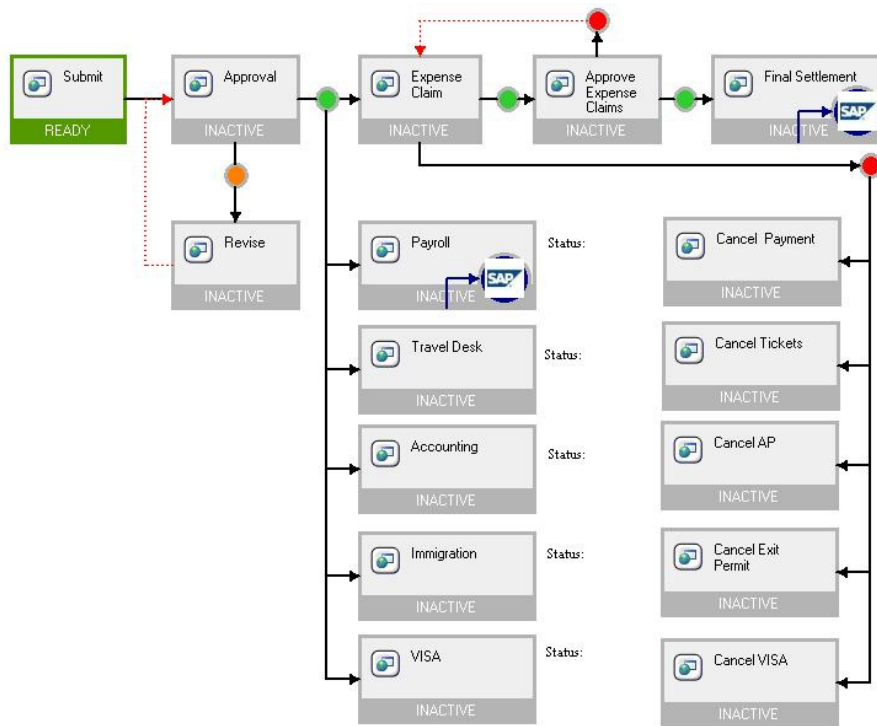
The Development and Test Environments are the preliminary stages before taking any workflow into production. By having this process, deployed workflows are coming into production with close to zero defects (bugs) which has empowered the user adoption rates enormously.

The Production environment consists of clustered servers for the database and main applications that provide high-availability and fault-tolerance capabilities.

Business Travel Request

Before the involvement of Netways, the Business travel process was completely manual. An objective was set to automate the Business Travel process for all Qatar-Gas employees. This process was in itself consisting of 3 main processes namely approval by business users based on financial authority, payroll activity, and personal administration activity. Qatar-Gas put Netways on the job to benefit from the best practices Netways has acquired in automating business processes and implementing process improvements and efficiencies for the last 7 years.

The Business Travel Process is developed on top of Netways Workflow Integration Framework. The workflow consists of several tasks as shown in the workflow model below.



The following bullet points walk you through the important aspects of this workflow:

- The first of which is Submit Business Travel Form carried out by all Qatar-Gas employees where information pertaining to the employee is automatically retrieved from Active Directory where the latter is synced with SAP. Other information such as mission, destination, and travel start and end dates, need to be filled out by the requestor. Per Diem rate is selected according to the destination country. For internal Gulf - trips, employee may select "travel money" or "air ticket". In the former case, the economy ticket rate will be retrieved from SAP and then the workflow goes to Payroll for payment of per diems plus airfare. If user selects air ticket, request is routed to Travel Desk after financial approval to obtain current economy fare to destination and then the workflow continues to the payroll similar to the first case.

- The second task is the Approval task based on the Financial Authority of the approvers. The Financial Authority Hierarchy is retrieved from SAP and directly integrated with the workflow platform. Each person in the Financial Authority has a certain limit to approve. Depending on the travel costs the right person will receive the request for approval or rejection.
- The Expense Claim task serves the purpose of notifying the requestor that the request has been approved. The user can also use it to place claims for additional expenses and adjustment of start/end dates and destination.
- The purpose of the Approve Expense Claim task is to approve the trip details entered or modified by the requestor in the Expense Claim task.
- The Payroll task is targeted specifically at payroll employees who have the responsibility of specifying off-cycle expense payment dates. This also includes revision against policies, preparation of payment 2 weeks before travel date, account reconciliation for settlement upon employee return, and manual review with the HR department in case travel period is over 30 days. In the latter case, the Per Diem amount should be replaced with a negotiated contract. Automatic SAP entries will be created issuing trip expenses directly to the cost center. The next task is the Immigration task that has the purpose of printing the exit permit. The people responsible for the execution of this task should be able to open the template as a Word document pre-filled with information collected throughout the process and print it out. After the submission of this task, the requestor will be notified that the permit is ready. A task targeted at Qatar Airways personnel, Travel Desk, will enable them confirm that the travel tickets were issued.

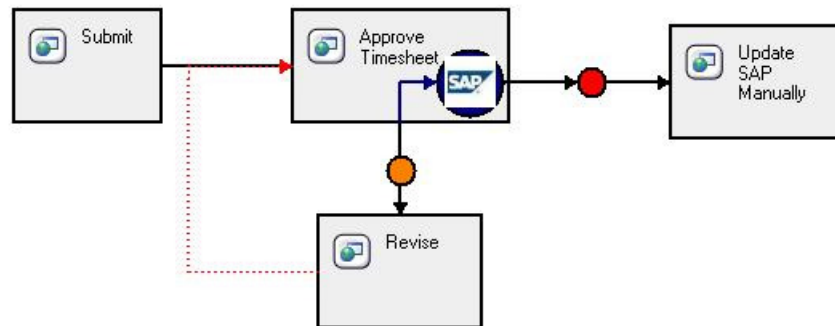
In return, the Accounts Payable clerk will execute the Accounting task verifying that the Travel Desk was paid for the tickets. The Final Settlement task is also executed by payroll to approve additional expense claims if any or finalize settlement if the trip did not go as scheduled and approved. In case no additional expenses are claimed and the trip went as approved, this task will not become active. By executing this task, payroll is able to approve or reject additional expense claims. In case the company owes payment to the employee, Payroll will enter the off-cycle date and a notification will be sent to the employee with this date and the balance amount. For additional payments, automatic SAP updates for off-cycle in the corresponding wage type will be processed. In case the employee owes payment to Qatar-Gas, the money is considered as "retained money" on employee's return notification form and Payroll will deduct this balance from the next salary. If the business trip is cancelled, deduction of the paid allowance will be made from employee's salary on monthly installments as may be approved by Human Resources Manager unless the employee requires an immediate settlement.

- Finally, Cancellation tasks will be available in the process in order to cancel running activities after the trip has been cancelled by the requestor. The tasks are called Cancel VISA, Cancel Payment, Cancel Tickets, Cancel Exit Permit, and Cancel AP.

The workflow participants described above are the Approval Chain (Retrieved from SAP), Requestor, First Approver, Payroll, Immigration section, Qatar Airways, and Accounts Payable clerk.

Project Timesheet Process

The Qatar-Gas project timesheet is used by direct hire and secondee personnel. The purpose of the timesheet business process automation is to capture and approve the hours worked on different projects by Qatar-Gas direct hire and secondees. After all the approvals have been carried out, the data is loaded in SAP for further processing.



The following bullet points walk you through the important aspects of Project Timesheet workflow:

- The first task in this process is to Submit a Project Timesheet Form. In this task the user inserts the work item, hours worked, AFE #, Staff #, WBS, and Cost Center. Once the user fills this data, a direct check is done in SAP to validate the AFE number, Staff no, and other SAP related information. Error messages will be displayed appropriately depending on the automatic check failure.
- The Approve Timesheet task is executed by users of the approval chain. The approval chain is stored in SAP and synced with the workflow platform to assign tasks appropriately. When the last approver in the chain receives the task and approves it an automatic SAP update is initiated to post the hours worked.
- If the SAP automatic update mentioned above was not completed successfully, a notification will be sent to the concerned people notifying them of the failure and giving them a second chance to initiate another automatic update.

The workflow participants for the Project Timesheet process are the Qatar-Gas employees & secondees, first level supervisor, second level supervisor, Department Manager, and Group manager.



Technologies used

- Microsoft SharePoint Server
- Captaris Workflow

Who are we?

Netways is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner with competencies in Information Worker and Business Solutions. Our solutions target a wide array of enterprise and small and medium size business challenges. In addition to our partnership with Microsoft, Netways has a well-built alliance with Captaris for providing fax automation, document management, and business process automation solutions. By leveraging our deep industry and technical expertise, Netways is able to provide customized end-to-end solutions for clients based on worldwide standards. The services we provide include consultancy, development, implementation, outsourcing, and training.



A Local company taking a Global View

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