



Business challenge

In the age of internet shopping, holidaymakers want to book their accommodation online. How could ORIS help real estate agents serve their customers, while also complying with government regulations?

Transformation

The Belgian government recently introduced legislation requiring all holiday homes to be individually registered. This led ORIS, which manages central data systems for the Belgian real estate sector, to develop the Lazee online booking platform with IBM® i—reducing time spent registering properties and coordinating listings nationwide.



Franky Deleu
Chief Information Officer
ORIS

Business benefits:

Saves

agents time by automatically registering properties

Enables

agencies to publish listings on several portal websites simultaneously

90%

adoption rate allows nationwide listings coordination

ORIS (Open Real Estate Information Services)

Streamlines bookings and compliance for Belgian real estate agents

ORIS (Open Real Estate Information Services) was established in 2004 to aid the real estate sector in the evolution towards the digital economy, particularly in the context of e-Government initiatives. Through its sectoral IT infrastructure, ORIS has enabled automation of information and work processes within the major players of the Belgian real estate sector. Its clients include the Social Fund for the Real Estate Sector, the Professional Institute for Real Estate Brokers, and the Flemish Institute for Real Estate Training.

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Registering a challenge

Booking a holiday home online can be a pain, with multiple agencies making various offerings, and no easy way to compare prices. On top of this, the Belgian government recently introduced legislation requiring all holiday accommodation be officially registered, placing administrative strain on real estate agents.

Franky Deleu is Chief Information Officer at ORIS—the representative partner for the Belgian real estate industry for e-Government initiatives and industry-wide IT services and partnerships. ORIS also manages the sector's central data systems.

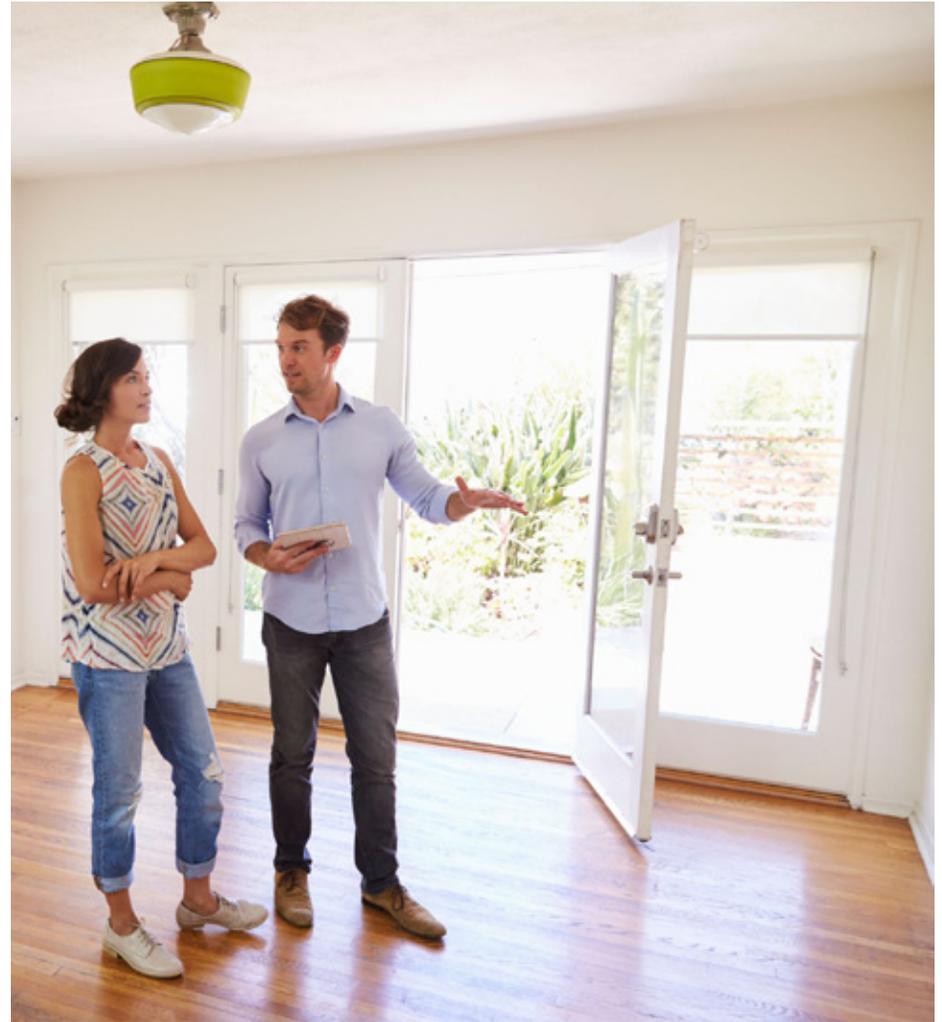
He explains: “This year, the Belgian government has brought in new legislation, requiring all holiday homes to be registered and licensed by the government. That obviously creates a lot of extra work for real estate agents, who now need to register every rental property in their portfolio.

“There's also the issue of how estate agents promote themselves online. With so many property websites out there, it can be hard for agencies to promote themselves across all of them.”

In addition, agents faced challenges with processing customers' requests. ORIS had previously developed an online booking system using another service provider, but the system was too slow to be effective.

“The main issue was price and occupation time queries,” Franky Deleu explains. “Customers would want to view a property, but the existing solution was just too slow in checking the central database, and struggled to load the information fast enough. Customers would just get bored of waiting, and that meant the solution never really took off.

“We realized that, in moving to a new solution to help agents handle the new government legislation, we also had an opportunity to improve our customer service, and help agencies with online promotion.”



Organizing the agencies

Working with IBM Business Partner CD Invest, ORIS created the Lazee platform, an online portal which automatically registers holiday rental properties with the government. Lazee also offers an online booking platform for consumers, by centralizing data from the majority of agencies across the country.

Koen Decorte, Business Partner at CD Invest, explains: “The Lazee platform offers secure connections with the government’s web platform, the VLIS, so agencies can make sure they are complying with property registration requirements. The system automatically validates all the addresses in an agency’s portfolio, and also generates a PIM number for each new property.

“What’s more, the Lazee platform works as a portal for several different holiday booking websites, which means agencies don’t have to create separate listings on each one. There is total coordination of property data, so we avoid double bookings. As soon as a customer reserves a holiday home, even if they do it over the phone or in a high street branch, the system automatically takes it off all the travel websites running on Lazee for those dates.”

The front-end of the solution runs on a Linux partition on an IBM Power® System S814, with the core database and some other elements running on IBM i on the same physical server, alongside ORIS’s core business systems. “It’s a mutually supportive operation,” continues Koen Decorte. “All the data and the photos for each property reside on the i, as well as some of the system logic. But then you have some features, like local sights and restaurant recommendations, that are added by the end consumers, and those features are all running in Drupal on Linux.

“We’re seeing excellent performance with this combined system—it’s loading data and responding to queries much faster than the previous solution ever did. What’s more, the new web portal is completely integrated with the back-end systems running on IBM i, many of which our client has been successfully using for a number of years. In this way, the solution combines tried-and-trusted systems with the latest in open source innovation to create new value.”

In addition to Drupal, the solution makes use of several other open source packages including Curl and ImageMagick, and takes advantage of the IBM Db2® driver for Linux to query the integrated Db2 database on IBM i.

All webservice were developed using RPG and SQL on IBM i—the RPG applications send responses to the front-end in the form of JSON documents.



Sunny days ahead

With the Lazee platform running on IBM Power Systems™ in place, ORIS has seen far more interest in its online real estate solutions.

“We’ve seen a huge spike in demand since we moved the web portal to run on IBM i on our Power S814 server,” says Franky Deleu. “The market adoption rate is higher than we ever could have predicted—last time we checked, 90 percent of the Belgian market was using it to register and promote their holiday homes, which means property listings can be coordinated nationwide in a way they weren’t before.

“The solution also delivers huge time savings in terms of compliance. It used to take agents weeks to manually register each property with the government—now each registration can be completed within days, or even hours. This frees up agents to focus on other more value-adding tasks.”

Looking to the future, ORIS plans to expand the Lazee platform even further, and create greater efficiencies through automation.

Franky Deleu concludes: “We’re currently exploring the automation of contracts, payments, monitoring of cleaning and repairs to each property, and even systems to manage insurance policies and report maintenance figures directly to agencies.

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Solution components

- IBM® i
- IBM Power® System S814

Take the next step

To learn more about IBM i on IBM Power System, please contact your IBM representative or Business Partner, or visit: ibm.com/power/i

CD Invest delivers ICT and business consultancy services to help maximize its clients’ business potential. For more information, visit: cdinvest.be

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