

# Equipped for the future – data integration ensures security and efficiency

**Tim Pieters from Antwerp Euroterminal NV talks about the added value that edbic and edpem bring to a port terminal operator, in day-to-day business and in the long term**

*The logistics of a transshipment port is, in many respects, a complex matter. A look at the IT architecture of the Belgian port terminal operator Antwerp Euroterminal NV confirms this. There, Tim Pieters is responsible for the smooth interaction of the different divisions' IT infrastructures. In order to future-proof the flawless execution of the many complex processes and in order to exploit the new possibilities of digital data exchange, he has introduced a central integration platform as a "data hub". Tim Pieters proudly reports on the effects he has already achieved.*

**compacer: Mr. Pieters, you are now using our edbic platform to consolidate and process the various data formats of your IT systems. What has triggered this strategic reorientation?**

**Tim Pieters:** Until three years ago, I programmed all integrations myself. Due to an increasingly fragmented and isolated knowledge but even more for security reasons, it was clear to me that I absolutely had to change something in the long term. So, when I shared these thoughts with the consultants from HPC Hamburg Port Consulting, they put me in touch with compacer. Then, everything happened very quickly.

**compacer: What does that mean?**

**Tim Pieters:** I've had a close look at edbic's functions and features and found that this solution covered all our data integration requirements. I then defined a wish list; we did a two-day workshop and compacer provided me with a proof of concept. After that, it was pretty clear that compacer would provide the solution to meet all our challenges. Even better: edbic answered all our questions and then some.

**compacer: That sounds like a pragmatic approach. What hurdles did you need to overcome during the implementation?**

**Tim Pieters:** There were three important aspects: First of all, I needed to share the knowledge I had acquired over the years with my colleagues, so that we could adapt edbic to our needs from the very beginning. Secondly, all those affected by the change had to be taken along. Whenever processes change, you need a high level of acceptance from all colleagues involved if you want to bring your innovation to fruition. And finally, you have to be open to some trial and error.

**compacer: Were your customers a factor, or was this change initiated primarily for internal reasons?**

**Tim Pieters:** Not at all, the wishes of our customers were definitely decisive. After all, the integrations I had programmed before had been entirely customer-driven: a customer would express a specific wish before we took action. But we wanted to reverse this process, that is, we wanted to make sure that we could actively offer our customers special services, for example in cargo bundling or labelling. Customer requirements are a top priority here at Antwerp Euroterminal.

**compacer: How did compacer's integration solution help you in creating these new service offers?**

**Tim Pieters:** It helped in many re-

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Tim Pieters,  
IT System Engineer  
of Antwerp Euroterminal NV





spects, actually, not least because the platform is based on open source software, which means that virtually anything is possible. We thus looked at all those possibilities and subsequently developed the services that had a good chance at sparking our client's interest. For the first time, we were able to offer services before anyone asked for them. By now, this anticipatory development of new services has become a matter of course, but it would not have been possible in the past – for structural reasons, but also for lack of time.

**compacer: And what do the customers or management think of it?**

**Tim Pieters:** Feedback is positive across the board. There's simply no one who doesn't like edbic. Our customers benefit from the additional services; our colleagues from the fact that data integration responsibilities are now distributed on several shoulders – but basically, integration is fully automated and works independently anyway. The catch is, you have to look ahead and make smart decisions across the whole process, because the more you integrate, the more you need to be careful not to drown in all that data.

Still, edbic is a great thing overall and our CTO is happy that we are no longer held back by any restrictions when it comes to connecting new systems and data formats, externally or internally. Mind you, this whole project was a side show at first.

**compacer: What do you mean? Did you not aim for centralised data integration?**

**Tim Pieters:** I did, but the issue only came up in the context of migrating to a new IT environment. I thought it would make sense to use this change to also introduce a platform that would simplify data matching. At that time, it was quite the complex task to bring together the data of, for instance, container gantry cranes and AGVs (automated guided vehicles) with our TOS (Terminal Operation System) and with our management or control programs. Today, all of this magically runs in the background.

**compacer: Would you provide a concrete example?**

**Tim Pieters:** Let's take the work outside at the terminal for an example. This work is often executed by external service providers whose em-

ployees work in shifts at our company. To control this, in terms of human resources and, above all, payroll accounting, is an enormous effort. Thanks to edbic, we have found a way to read the relevant data of these employees directly from their employee cards, for example, their exact working times and their activities. What's great about it is that the integration has significantly reduced HR's workload, but they still do not need any technical knowledge at all. Now, everything can be controlled in an easy way, they tick a check box and the data is automatically passed on to the payroll accounting system. That's a huge relief.

**compacer: That sounds great! Are there any other visible effects?**

**Tim Pieters:** Yes, because we also use edbic as an IoT gateway. I can give the following example: The cargo area is where the ships are unloaded, that is, where they are lifting the containers from the ships. The cranes automatically weigh each individual container using sensors and integrate the measurements directly into the system – via edbic. Previously, it was time-consuming to bring this information into our ERP



system. Now, edbic makes it happen within seconds and everyone is informed. We now regard that as trivial, but in other harbours, such a thing is far from being standard.

**compacer: That certainly isn't all, is it? I assume you have further plans.**

**Tim Pieters:** That's right, because we are planning to go live with edpem, compacer's process event monitoring tool, next year. Our CTO, among others, expects this to provide even more in-depth analysis and control options. That's why, during the introduction of edbic, we have designed the entire process so that we can easily integrate edpem. The tool is already in use in parts of Production, and for Administration, we have followed compacer's recommendation of working with placeholders so that we can switch over at the push of a button later on.

**compacer: Let us wrap up with a question about the cooperation with compacer's team. What can you say?**

**Tim Pieters:** I am as enthusiastic about the collaboration as I am about

the product. Above all, they are impressively creative when it comes to finding solutions, and their flexibility and untiring commitment are equally remarkable. In the cargo area, for example, we once had to integrate a number of legal requirements and rather exotic formats to satisfy the Belgian customs service. We just didn't have any idea how to do it and so the compacer team came up with a cool, creative and pragmatic approach. I have been positively surprised to see what challenges we can handle and overcome using this integration platform. Now I know, no matter what happens, compacer is a partner who will always stand by my side and that gives me a good feeling.

**compacer: Thank you, Mr. Pieters, for giving us this insight into your work with edbic.**

*"Since implementing edbic, we have seen improvements that we didn't anticipate before – for example in service billing, in the business analysis of data or in the creation of new services for our customers."*

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