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ING Bank Netherlands: from Tango to RIO

Bart Schlatmann, Chief Operating Officer of ING Domestic Bank Netherlands, sat in his office in Amsterdam near the famous Ajax football stadium in Spring 2016 and reflected on the next stage in ING Netherlands' transformation journey. The last 12 months had seen the introduction of a radical new way of working in many parts of the head office, and all evidence pointed to it being a success.

Schlatmann had been involved in the whole transformation journey since 2006, but he knew there were plenty of new challenges on the horizon. One was how to keep the model evolving; to get the right balance between individual freedom and top-down control. Another was whether and how fast to roll out this new way of working to other parts of the ING Group. Could this agile way of working be adopted quickly across the entire ING Group? Or should ING wait until it was properly bedded down in the head office operations before rolling it out further?

ING overview

While its history could be traced back to 1881, ING Group was formally established in 1991 through a merger of three Dutch financial services firms. Through the 1990s, ING Group expanded by acquisition into Belgium, USA, Latin America, Poland and Mexico and in 1995 bought UK-based Barings Bank after its dramatic failure.

To expand its retail banking business overseas without creating a branch network, the company launched ING Direct. The first of these was set up in Canada in 1997 and was soon followed in a number of other countries, including the USA, UK, Germany, France and Australia. ING Direct offered a range of focused, no-frills savings accounts, mortgages, payment accounts and consumer-lending products.

By 2010 it was the largest direct bank in the world. with over 23 million customers. By 2015, ING Group was the fourth largest bank in the Eurozone by market capitalisation.

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