gen3

Boehringer Ingelheim

discover
A SmartSimple Discover user

Success Story:
Boehringer Ingelheim

How the world's largest private pharmaceutical company built a unified platform for its research funding process and scaled it across the globe

With more than 51,000 employees operating in 18 countries, Boehringer Ingelheim (BI) has a massive global footprint. A critical piece of its business is the funding of medical research and development, and in 2019 the company identified a key area of opportunity. BI's research grants management processes were manual and needed updating.

BI needed a consolidated solution; a single platform to unify its global grantmaking while being flexible enough to capture the needs and nuances of each local operating unit. In a vastly ambitious multi-stage build, Gen3 converted BI's unique and highly complex requirements into capabilities on Platform3, SmartSimple's cloud-based automation and collaboration technology. The result was a transformation of how BI manages its funding through a centralized platform routing all requests globally, which the company branded Lectrona. Lectrona automated workflows and reporting, made the funding process more transparent to stakeholders, and strengthened collaboration with BI's affiliates and partners worldwide. The project was successful and in 2021 BI plans to expand the system even further for other lines of business.

Boehringer Ingelheim

Client since: 2019

Type of work:
External Research Grants
Medical Education Grants

Current platform:
SmartSimple Platform3

Previous platform:
Excel spreadsheets and
Word documents

Key requirements

- Streamlined workflow management for all funding types: grants, sponsorships, investigator-initiated studies, collaborative research, charitable contribution
- Transparent handling of each step of the granting process with robust reporting to avoid compliance-related issues
- Seamless collaboration with global partners

About Boehringer Ingelheim

Headquartered in Germany, Boehringer Ingelheim (BI) is a world-leading research-driven private pharmaceutical company creating value through innovation in three business areas: Human Pharma, Animal Health, and Biopharmaceutical Contract Manufacturing. In 2019, the company achieved net sales of $21.3 billion, with its biggest markets in Germany, the US, Japan and China. BI has invested over $3.9 billion in R&D by providing grants and charitable contributions to advance discovery and enable the next generation of medicines that save lives and improve quality of life.

A decentralized, manual system for funding requests

Prior to working with Gen3, BI's funding managers received requests sporadically – by email, verbally at events, and even through physical mail. With no standardized intake process, applications were processed by siloed regional affiliates based on local procedures that required enormous manual effort.

Choosing an effective grants management solution

BI started by defining a set of global operating procedures and requirements to guide their RFP process. First on the list was standardization. The platform had to capture BI's multi-faceted grants management process and standardize it globally, while providing a pain-free user experience for applicants.

The next priority was transparency of BI's grants approval stages for both financial tracking and compliance purposes. To keep all stakeholders informed and compliant, the new platform had to give BI advanced reporting and tracking capabilities.

Another priority was enabling what BI calls External Collaborative Research. *"Our starting point was to fund partners on specific requests for research grants,"* says Kischner. *"But as we thought about other engagement types, it became important to build an efficient process – and a system that supports that process – in the area of external collaboration."* Whether contributing expertise for clinical research, creating a protocol for a study, or engaging in partnerships on data and technology or outcomes research, BI's goal was to keep everything on one platform to seamlessly collaborate with applicants.

Based on these requirements, SmartSimple's Platform3 was chosen as the best platform to manage and unify BI's global funding efforts.

A unique service for a complex global implementation

BI, with Gen3 as a trusted partner, mapped out its entire funding management process. The unique requirements and sheer scale of such a global implementation went beyond SmartSimple's standard research grants management solution, Discover, so Gen3 fully tailored the underlying Platform3 to match BI's particular needs. The result was a reinvention of BI's workflow in a centralized hub for all funding types – grants, sponsorships, investigator-initiated studies, and collaborative research programs.

A responsive multi-stage rollout

BI's funding managers gained capabilities within the platform like reporting, filters, emailing, and guided workflow management to react quickly to applicants and even automate the assignment of reviewers for certain types of requests. As for compliance, *"I get all my relevant spend reports in time and quality; all customers are checked via a pre-defined standardized debarment process,"* says a BI compliance manager.

Beyond the initial deployment, BI's list of functionalities kept growing. Take Japan, one of its core business units. *"Whenever we implement new models globally, there are questions from countries like Japan on whether we can translate it, as the majority of their platforms are translated,"* says Kischner. Gen3 made it possible for BI to fully translate Lectrona for customers in Japan – no small feat when converting software from an alphabetic language like English to a character-based language like Japanese.

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We needed to have a stringent process for governance and a platform that could support us by storing everything in one place, providing transparency with internal stakeholders and the external partners we collaborate with.

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Stanislav Kischner
Global Data & Platform Owner

Rapid responses to a global pandemic

During the pandemic, BI received numerous requests for COVID-19 research funding through Lectrona. The company could react quickly to these because Gen3 had made the review process itself more efficient. Reviewers provided input and assessed funding requests and program outcomes much faster than before. With such a flexible platform, BI has accelerated its responses to those with immediate funding needs to make an impact during turbulent times.

Expanding the use of the platform

Given Lectrona's success, BI plans to implement other projects – charitable contributions, animal health research funding, co-pay foundation supports – just to name a few. And it doesn't stop there. *"In 2021 and beyond, we're looking at partnerships with payers and care groups around the world, to see if we can manage those more complex partnerships through the standardized process on Lectrona,"* says Kischner. All those programs and data will roll up within the platform to further highlight BI's impact on medical research across the globe. As Dr. Mehdi Shahidi, Senior VP Medicine, says, *"We're in a great time of innovation, and as BI we want to be sharing our success for the ultimate benefit of the patient."*

gen3

Since 2007, Gen3 has been developing, configuring, and implementing holistic grant and case management solutions enabling philanthropic organizations to align their vision with the achievement of their goals. By leveraging the dynamic flexibility of SmartSimple's Platform3, Gen3 delivers state-of-the-art collaborative solutions that empower some of the largest, highest profile organizations in the world, enabling them to maximize their mission's impact.

Gen3 takes a truly collaborative approach that enables them to understand unique business challenges and deliver software solutions that truly transforms organizations. They work with clients to identify their requirements, recommend and implement flexible and innovative solutions, train their personnel, and ensure a successful go-live.

Learn more at **www.gen3impact.com**