

Uniting the House

By Tom Alford,
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RTB House is a Poland-based ad-tech company. It uses deep learning algorithms to provide marketing and advertising solutions to some of the world's largest brands and agencies. A rapidly growing portfolio of overseas entities meant consolidation of its fragmented bank account structure was essential. Beata Czerner, Treasurer, RTB House Group, Marcin Barejko, Senior Implementation Project Manager, BNP Paribas Bank Polska, and Krzysztof Hok, Cash Management Sales Director, Strategic and Corporate Clients, BNP Paribas Bank Polska, talk to TMI about the project and its achievements so far.

In the third quarter of 2022 alone, international ad-tech company RTB House opened six new entities around the world. Rapid growth is part of its plan to expose yet more of the world's largest brands and agencies to the advantages of its proprietary deep learning algorithms. Capable of placing the right online message, in the right place, at the right time, it's a technology approach that its clients appreciate. Yet with RTB House expanding in every direction globally, growth was bringing with it a set of challenges for its finance function which demanded attention.

When Czerner joined RTB House in 2021, the group had a presence in approaching 30 countries, including Brazil, US, UK,

France, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore. It also had billings in more than 20 currencies, which it was struggling to manage through its broad panel of domestic banks. Although these banks had been selected based in part on their local foothold and ease of account opening, it was proving difficult to integrate their separately provided account and transactional data within treasury's core system in Poland. As growth accelerated, so this was becoming an increasing yet unnecessary risk.

As might be expected, acquiring information on balances and payments flows across the group was a slow, labour-intensive procedure. And, for that reason, it happened just twice a month. With the attendant potential for human error in manual data keying, and a lack of established rules regarding account access, RTB House's legacy approach was no longer appropriate.

Making connections

"We had to find a unifying solution for all, or at least most, of the entities within in our global structure. We also wanted to secure the services of a single large banking partner so we could establish a strong and valuable business relationship," Czerner recalls. Following a rigorous selection process, BNP Paribas stood out from the crowd, the bank best able to help RTB House secure coverage of most of its entities through its two connected global services, Connexis Cash and Connexis Gateway.

In addition to BNP Paribas' significant presence in the international markets, Czerner says that it was clear that the Connexis Cash platform would "give access to all our accounts in one place, provide up-to-date funds information, and in most countries be able to send and receive

payments and transfers." She notes too that the platform would enable RTB House's treasury for the first time to set up a global payments authorisation structure.

The addition of Connexis Gateway for host-to-host integration means treasury is able to automatically take balances from any of its BNP Paribas accounts, wherever they are, and upload these into its central ERP. This creates a single point through which RTB House can manage its funds, with treasury able to see the same information on the Connexis portal as in its core system.

Within RTB House, two project teams had been set up to manage the opening phases, one taking responsibility for the banking side, the other for RTB House internal work. These teams consisted of personnel from IT and finance, with regular meetings set to discuss progress, agree next steps, and solve any issues.

As part of the early discussions, the scope of the implementation was extended, requiring BNP Paribas to deliver the implementation of XML payments in some countries, including Brazil. The extension also called for a number of reporting enhancements by the bank. RTB House added to the standard Connexis Gateway reporting package with solutions such as CAMT reporting, which includes Payments Status Report (PSR) functionality.

PSR messages carry a unique end-to-end transaction reference (UETR), which can be generated by RTB House when a payment is initiated. The system greatly assists payment tracking and reconciliation, comments Czerner. And with some of RTB House's entities sending payments directly from the system to Connexis via the Gateway solution, she notes too that it brings cost savings while avoiding manual keying error.



BEATA CZERNER

Treasurer, RTB House Group

While the additions and enhancements required a lot of Czerner's time, working mostly with the team from BNP Paribas Poland meant the effort has paid off. "The result of a long-term close relationship between RTB House and BNP Paribas was very efficient cooperation, and the teams on both sides showed great responsiveness," comments Barejko.

"It helped that every participant of the broad project team, from both bank and client, had been keen to establish effective communications from the outset," he continues. "This remains the case today, with our team here at BNP Paribas Poland acting as RTB House's first point of contact for any support issues for the entire group." For Czerner, it's an arrangement that she says, "works very well for us".

Unifying effort

As with every complex project, challenges were encountered. One of the early issues for RTB House was tackling the range of KYC and onboarding processes found in different jurisdictions. "We were required sometimes to create extra documentation just to allow us to start using Connexis," recalls Czerner. These administrative frustrations were resolved in partnership with BNP Paribas Poland. The bank supported and co-ordinated the effort, calling upon its global experience

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and delivering solutions such as its onboarding application tool and its harmonised documentation process.

The initial implementation process took around 18 months, with the go-live reaching 18 countries, with services implemented for 32 entities. At the time of writing, some 78 BNP Paribas bank accounts have been integrated into the single standardised Connexis platform with payments authorisation functionality that enables full access management across the group.

Indeed, with RTB House's accounts spread across multiple countries, the project has established an almost fully automated connection with the centralised treasury in Poland. Of course, with RTB House continually creating new entities around the world, and opening new accounts for each, the roll-out and BNP Paribas' support is ongoing.

"RTB House had very clear goals and expectations from the beginning," says Hok. "The project has a high level of complexity, with different legal environments and payments mechanisms to tackle, and under those circumstances, it would be difficult for any treasury team approaching this on a case-by-case basis to learn every domestic requirement," he says.

However, Hok was "immediately impressed" by RTB House's timely commitment to the project to consolidate and standardise its view through "one window for the whole world." He continues "[the RTB House team] fully understands the benefits of having a single point of visibility and control over all its accounts and balances, across all the entities under the system, and we're happy that we've been able to answer all of their needs, with Connexis providing that unified platform, even where local specifics for RTB House are quite different".

Enduring solution

The world of the corporate treasurer has undergone significant change over the past year, with Barejko noting that the level of competitiveness vies with the pressures of regulation for attention. Of course, both must be attended to with equal commitment.

"It's driving treasurers to rethink the way they operate," Barejko comments. "Many are now moving towards centralisation and automation of their operations, but they still face the challenge of running different banking platforms and managing different connectivity standards. They know it's a source of operational risk, and that it is costly to maintain that approach. That's why companies such as RTB House understand what they need to do next."

Indeed, having created that much-needed single environment with unified connectivity, the benefits are manifold, Czerner believes. They include faster receivables settlements, improved transaction security, process cost and time reductions, and better fraud management and detection. "But the greatest benefit is access to our information," she says.

The significantly improved visibility, control, and security over transactions and balances have been instrumental in optimising treasury and group financial decisions. Indeed, she states: "For a group with as many entities and accounts as RTB House, a solution such as Connexis is essential."

With the ongoing roll-out of Connexis to accounts across the group, and the expectation that BNP Paribas will be developing its solutions in line with its customers' needs, Czerner says communication with the bank remains strong and focused on future deliverables. "I'm sure it's a partnership that will continue to grow." ■



KRZYSZTOF HOK

Cash Management Sales Director,
Strategic and Corporate Clients,
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MARCIN BAREJKO

Senior Implementation Project
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