

Swedish Railways



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A limited company owned by the Swedish state since 2001, Swedish Railways (SJ) offers environmentally friendly travel on modern trains, which provide value for money and the opportunity for the passengers to use their traveling time effectively. As a modern, profitable, and customer-centred company, SJ is constantly making efforts to improve the punctuality and quality of their service, forging close cooperative links with other rail transport authorities and investing in a new train specially designed for long-distance traffic. With the new equipment, SJ will soon have the capacity to replace air travel between Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö, generating massive environmental benefits for society.

Challenges faced

The management team at SJ has been using an IBM Cognos solution for some time, but decided to extend its usage in order to gain a better overview of the business. Travel with SJ is increasing at over twice the rate seen in the Swedish passenger transport sector as a whole. This means that there are larger volumes of data from SJ's transaction systems, including SAP, and the management team knew it could reach better substantiated decisions with more control and oversight of the data.

Lars-Åke Persson, Manager of the Financial Systems Departments at SJ, explains the situation facing SJ. “Previously, SJ had a number of individual computer systems to manage its financial operations, but the management team required a total system in order to gain a better overview of the company's business.”

Strategy followed

The SJ management team made the decision to expand its IBM Cognos system to handle its growing requirements. Persson says, “SJ is performing well, but there is nothing that is so good that it cannot be improved. The company is now taking the next step and benefiting from the advantages of the IBM Cognos platform for business management.”

Industry:

- Railway transportation

Geography:

- Sweden

Information needs:

- Overview of company-wide data
- Scorecards, reporting, and data analysis
- Ease of use in geographically distributed organization
- Scalability and possibilities for expansion of usage

Platform:

- SAP

Solution:

- IBM Cognos 8 BI

Benefits:

- Ease of use and flexibility, which help spread user adoption
- Scorecarding, analysis, and reporting, which improve the management team's decision-making
- Ability to expand into email reports and planning
- Scalability for inclusion of more input data systems

The result was a BI solution with a data warehouse at its base, and reporting and analysis functions for the planning and follow-up of finances, personnel, production, sales, and customer service. “After having lived with the Oracle reporting tool for some time, we chose IBM Cognos for its great flexibility and simple user interface,” explains Persson. “The scorecard module is invaluable with its red and green “traffic light” that displays the key ratios. At a glance, users have simple pointers as to whether the value lies within the budgetary parameters, or if immediate action needs to be taken. Using the analysis functions, we can carry out analyses of the reported data, and we have created

around thirty basic reports that anybody can adapt to their own personal needs.”

SJ also has additional plans for the IBM Cognos system. “We will continue to extend our use of the Cognos tools and develop the BI section in the database with further information,” says Persson. “Several newly-constructed systems will deliver data to the same platform. An example of this is the new system to deal with traffic congestion. The system provides SJ personnel and customers with reports on the trains, and helps to order taxis and busses, all of which basically gives our customers a better experience. The system is run separately, but the output data still ends up in the IBM Cognos tools. Also, the existing IBM Cognos reporting functionality will deal with reporting to the corporate management team when the new system for managing congestion comes into operation. The system will thereby be given new tasks that were not part of the original plans.”

Benefits realized

As well as the initial benefits of scorecards, and improved analysis and reporting, SJ is enjoying the ease of use and user-friendliness of its IBM Cognos solution. Another huge advantage of the system for SJ is its scalability and the almost unlimited opportunities for new usage it provides within the various departments and divisions of the organization.

“There are still parts of the Cognos system that we have not utilized,” says Persson, “but we are now in the process of investigating how certain modules could be used to bring up sales figures in a better way. As well, a greater number of people will now be able to make detailed enquiries within the database than was previously the case. We are looking forward to start using the new functions, as these will enable us to make

searches within a large data set with acceptable response times and to ask extremely detailed questions. This will be completely new for us.”

Many other possibilities are unfolding, as Persson explains, “We can also see a development where a number of other systems, such as various types of planning systems, will start to deliver information to our data warehouse, which will provide us with a much broader base on which to use our IBM Cognos tools than we have had up to now. Data push with personal reports in e-mails is another exciting possibility.”

Lars-Åke Persson has seen the development of the whole IBM Cognos system over time, and concludes, “The system was originally created solely for reporting in relation to controlling, finance, and management, but an increasing number of areas have gradually been included. Others within the company have realised that IBM Cognos is a good tool to work with. The more information one has, the better the picture of the business one can gain.”

About Cognos, an IBM company

Cognos, an IBM company, is the world leader in business intelligence and performance management solutions. It provides world-class enterprise planning and BI software and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. Cognos was acquired by IBM in January 2008*. For more information, visit <http://www.ibm.com/software/data/> and <http://www.cognos.com>.

**As a result of the acquisition, product names have now changed to reference IBM at the beginning of the software or service.*