



Overview

Country or Region: Denmark

Industry: Logistics

Customer Profile

Container Centralen provides trolleys to transport flowers, pot plants, fruit, and vegetables throughout Europe. Headquartered in Denmark, the company serves 23,000 customers in 40 countries.

Business Situation

Following rapid growth, Container Centralen needed to decentralise management and logistics functions, manage performance targets locally, and improve reporting internationally.

Solution

The company deployed bespoke, Web-based logistics and reporting applications running on a centralised Microsoft® SQL Server™ 2000 database.

Benefits

- Performance targets can be set locally.
- Enhanced view of trolley traffic in and out of warehouses.
- Better reporting internationally.
- Reduced workload for technical staff.
- Low total cost of ownership for the new system.

Logistics Specialist Enhances Business Intelligence with Data Warehousing Solution

“Already, we have noticed that area managers are showing much greater commitment to targets that they set themselves.”

[Morten Storm, IT Manager, Container Centralen](#)

Logistics specialist Container Centralen operates a fleet of almost 3 million trolleys. These are used to transport flowers, pot plants, fruit, and vegetables throughout Europe. During the past 10 years, the company has grown rapidly, requiring decentralisation of management and logistics functions. To support effective management of the trolley fleet and accurate performance analysis, the company has deployed a new Web-based application and data warehousing solution based on a Microsoft® SQL Server™ 2000 database. The new system means local employees can monitor the flow of trolleys in and out of their warehouses. It also helps area managers take responsibility for local performance targets and supports in-depth reporting based on accurate business data. As a result of the new system, the company expects to increase operational efficiency and profitability across the board.



"We needed new technology tools to support effective logistics management and reporting across our business infrastructure."

Morten Storm, IT Manager, Container Centralen

Situation

Container Centralen operates a fleet of almost 3 million trolleys for distributing flowers, fruit, vegetables, and pot plants. These trolleys help horticultural producers, distributors, and resellers in Europe to exchange goods cost effectively and efficiently. The company, which is jointly owned by Danish flower exporters and distributors, has 23,000 customers in 40 countries. It employs 70 people in Europe, including 25 at corporate headquarters in Odense, Denmark.

The core business of Container Centralen is to ensure that producers, vehicle drivers, and stores have the trolleys they need to transport their fruit, vegetable, flowers, and pot plants effectively. The ability to control the delivery and return of trolleys is a key requirement.

Container Centralen has expanded rapidly over the past 10 years, requiring the company to decentralise its management infrastructure and logistical operations. With large increases in trolley numbers, the company needed new IT tools to manage traffic and returns. New reporting tools were also required to assess business performance information across all branches internationally.

Morten Storm, IT Manager, Container Centralen, says: "We have twice as many employees as four years ago and we now have large operations worldwide. It was becoming difficult to achieve an overview of traffic flow and to control our business activities effectively at our 70 warehouses internationally. As a result, we needed new technology tools to support effective logistics management and reporting across our business infrastructure."

Changes to working practices also augmented the need for more effective

management and reporting tools at Container Centralen. Storm says: "As the supply chains of our customers become increasingly complex, it is more difficult to meet their needs. We transport trolleys in every direction and need systems that track and handle deliveries effectively and report on our performance across the board."

Solution

The company deployed new IT solutions with support from Microsoft Certified Partner Platon in 2003. After an in-depth evaluation of available technologies, the development team began building a system based on a bespoke Web-based application and a Microsoft® SQL Server™ 2000 database.

By creating a data warehouse using SQL Server 2000, Container Centralen has achieved a centralised view of its entire trolley fleet and the movement of trolleys internationally. The Web-based interface to this system means employees can input information relating to local warehouses and access it centrally. In this way, they can stay up to date with the number of available trolleys as they come and go. The system was initially deployed in the company's 12 largest warehouses.

The new logistics application is fully integrated with a corporate business management and finance system, which is based on Microsoft Dynamics™ AX. This makes it easy to generate new orders and print invoices based on accurate business information.

The decision to deploy Microsoft technology was based on compatibility with a range of third-party reporting tools and low total cost of ownership. Storm says: "The open-standards-based Microsoft infrastructure means we can choose from around 50 reporting tools from a range of suppliers. In addition, the technology gives us a clear

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Morten Storm, IT Manager, Container Centralen

upgrade path, ensuring protection for our technology investments.”

Benefits

Tools built into the new Web-based solution help employees to administer the flow of trolleys between warehouses and clients at the click of a mouse. Using analysis tools provided with SQL Server 2000, local units can set performance targets and generate reports quickly and effectively.

Effective Generation of Specialist Reports

Business analysis tools integrated with SQL Server 2000, including Microsoft Analysis Services and Microsoft Data Transformation Services, support a range of complex reporting requirements at Container Centralen. Importantly, they automate the process of generating complex performance indices and reduce the workload for key administrative employees.

Storm says: “We have always needed access to specialist reports from all areas of the business. This historically increased the workload for our developers, whereas highly-specific reports can now be generated automatically by the system. These can be accessed centrally, increasing visibility across our operations and enhancing management decision making.”

Decentralised Responsibility for Business Performance

Individual business units are using the new system to set targets and take greater responsibility for their performance. This process is supported by reporting that is less detail orientated and more focused on balance scorecards that show overall performance statistics.

Storm says: “Individual units now take responsibility for their own development work and reporting. This helps us to further our strategy of decentralising management

decision making across the group. Already, we have noticed that area managers are showing much greater commitment to targets that they set themselves. While we can't yet measure the impact of this in financial terms, we anticipate significant increases in performance across the board. We can also see that communication between headquarters and area managers has increased significantly because of the new system.”

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For more information about Container Centralen products and services, visit the Web site at: www.container-centralen.com

Microsoft Dynamics

Microsoft Dynamics is a line of integrated, adaptable business management solutions that enables you and your people to make business decisions with greater confidence. Microsoft Dynamics works like familiar Microsoft software such as Microsoft Office, which means less of a learning curve for your people, so they can get up and running quickly and focus on what's most important. And because it is from Microsoft, it easily works with the systems that your company already has implemented. By automating and streamlining financial, customer relationship, and supply chain processes, Microsoft Dynamics brings together people, processes, and technologies, increasing the productivity and effectiveness of your business, and helping you drive business success.

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