

# Information on the right track within DSB



DSB HAS PUT ITS INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE UNDER CLOSE SCRUTINY. THE SILO WAY OF THINKING MUST BE REPLACED BY A CONSOLIDATED IT PLATFORM WITH INTEGRATED DATA MANAGEMENT AND A UNIFIED PERCEPTION OF THE BUSINESS. THE WORK LEADING TO THE MODERNIZATION OF THE SYSTEM WAS CARRIED OUT USING PLATON'S INFORMATION MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGY UTILIZING BEST PRACTICES FOR EXTENSIVE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY WORK.

A lurking feeling within IT that something did not run optimally started DSB's major IT consolidation project, Information på Tværs (IpT). They often encountered problems when trying to make new solutions, but nobody was able to pinpoint the exact cause. A spot test made the alarm bells sound.

- It turned out that the train stations were registered in 18 different versions, just in our traffic and planning systems. If we included the sales systems and the systems of Rail Net Denmark, the figure increased to 43. Customer information looked almost equally severe, as they were registered in 20 different systems, says Niels Lademark, IT architect and IpT responsible in DSB, and he continues,

- Seen in the rear-view mirror, the distributed data was a logical consequence of many years' of development in silos. This is a problem which many large companies with decentralized management will recognize. With DSB, we had reached a point where the information structure made it difficult for us to utilize data as a strategic asset. Therefore we had to take action.

## THOROUGH PREPARATIONS

Today, some two years later, DSB is implementing a new information architecture, but before this, detailed analysis and strategy work has been carried out, which has very accurately uncovered the challenges faced by DSB. All data, Master Data, Meta Data as well as transaction data, and reports were anchored in many different systems and departments. DSB was therefore facing an extremely complex project which would not only affect the IT structure, but also organizational relations.

## Methodology FROM A-Z

DSB started a co-operation with Platon who immediately recognized the problems from other, similar assignments. This became the start of a close, long-term co-operation about IpT. Today, both Niels Lademark and Søren Skovdal, Group Finance Director, say that the co-operation has been very profitable.

- Platon's Information Management methodology has governed the entire strategy project from day one. A transformation of this scope cannot possibly be implemented overnight, so DSB needed guidelines for approaching the project. We achieved

this through Platon's methodology, which also ensured that the IpT strategy supported the needs of the business, which I consider decisive if we are to obtain the support of the organization and thus the full benefit from the project, Søren Skovdal, Group Finance Director of DSB points out.

## RULES OF CONDUCT SECURE THE FUTURE

As part of the process, DSB and Platon carried out 60 interviews around the organization to uncover problems and wishes. The result was 40 business improvement initiatives which the IpT strategy must support. The strategy outlines a common set of rules for the treatment of data across the large organization. This applies for example to consolidation of common master data to avoid updating employee information in several different systems. It also applies to rules for data quality to avoid a host of different definitions of for example absence. With this centralization and formalization, DSB created the best possible structure for business improvements, such as the introduction of a new system to handle salary payments.



- You could say that we have obtained a set of rules of conduct enabling us to keep an open window for future prospects. The strategy is a compass for future investments in both IT and organization. In the future, we are going to invest more safely, and our development projects will follow the same path. As for the employees, I expect concrete savings, as there was a lot of wasted time and a large use of resources involved in maintaining the old systems, says Søren Skovdal.

## KNOWLEDGE IMPROVEMENT

Niels Lademark has been the day-to-day project manager for the IpT project, which he has been in charge of together with a core team of five people, two of whom from Platon. He does not hesitate to credit Platon for the enormous knowledge improvement DSB has achieved through the co-operation:

- Platon's consultants are very competent. I consider it a major advantage to co-operate with people who have handled similar projects within other large companies. It corresponds to having 145 years' experience on this project. Today, we would be able to reproduce a lot, but realistically I do not think the project would have been completed without the professional help and methodology. This is the assessment of Niels Lademark, and he continues,

- There is always the danger that the knowledge you build up with an external partner disappears because the external consultants and your own employees get new jobs. The Insight methodology is a guarantee that you can always go back and see what you did, when and why. That makes you feel safe.

## THREE PIECES OF GOOD ADVICE

According to Niels Lademark it is an enormous task to start as large an IT and organization project as IpT. He therefore recommends using a methodology for structuring the process. In DSB there is widespread satisfaction with Platon's methodology which has created a transparent project implementation process where you implement in manageable iterations. Niels Lademark advises against working in too much detail and getting in every corner. That makes the project complex and hard to contain. The last 20 percent of effort does not create additional value, but will take up 80 percent of the time. Niels Lademark has three pieces of good advice on how to proceed:

1. Use a methodology which will make the project process iterative.
2. Be operational. It is not an academic exercise.
3. Be 100 percent dedicated to the project, even if you use external consultants.



"Platon's methodology is very much based on business needs. The methodology ensured an operational, efficient project process, and we knew exactly what to do. I dare not think how many people and how much time we would have needed without a methodology."

**- NIELS LADEMARK, IT-ARCHITECT AND IPT RESPONSIBLE WITH DSB**

## INFORMATION PÅ TVÆRS

DSB has used Platon's Information Management methodology throughout the IpT project. From the start, the IpT project was approached as a iterative process with::

- rounds of interviews
- preparation of data model
- identification of data quality challenges
- establishment of target architecture
- policies for the organization

The mapping and the strategy led to four focus areas within IT which will support the 40 business initiatives which DSB and Platon identified during the interviewing rounds. The four focus areas are consolidation of customer data, consolidation of employee data, Enterprise data warehouse, and infrastructure for technical data such as station data.