



Commitment in Motion: metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft

Timetable, vehicle and workforce management with Trapeze



"Using the Trapeze system enables one person to control the entire logistics function, which is a big advantage for a young private company, which not least depends on achieving profitability whilst maintaining a high level of quality."

Wilmut König

Local Operations Manager
metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft mbH

THE ORGANISATION

"metronom" is the name given to the 18 double-decker trains belonging to metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft mbH (metronom Railway Company Ltd), a company incorporated in February 2002 with its head office in Uelzen, Lower Saxony. The metronom is the regional express train that has connected Hamburg with Bremen and Uelzen since 2003. The timetable change effected in December 2005 resulted in the route being extended from Uelzen via Hannover as far as Göttingen.

metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft mbH is the first private company within the public transport sector running an electrical main line service, which is recognised as being a major responsibility. The company considers itself to be a modern service provider offering the personal touch. A young dynamic team of staff and a range of innovative services (e.g. commuters with annual season tickets can enjoy the comfort of automatic seat reservation) ensure passenger satisfaction.

The Celle-based company NiedersachsenBahn GmbH (NB) is the principal partner (with 69.9%) of the metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft. NB is made up of two companies; "Osthannoversche Eisenbahnen AG" (OHE), Celle forms 60% of NB and "Eisenbahnen und Verkehrsbetriebe Elbe-Weser GmbH" (EVB), Zeven forms the other 40%. The other partners are Hamburger Hochbahn AG and Bremer Straßenbahn AG.

THE CHALLENGE

The metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft was looking for a compact and complete solution, which would support its workforce in both operational and personnel planning. The advantage of being a newly established company was that there were no legacy systems to consider. Only the payroll had to be adopted by the parent company OHE.

With passenger railway networks, the timetable is the basis on which all other plans are constructed. As a private company with a transport contract, the metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft needs to provide trains nearly every hour round the clock (04:00 to 0:00). The vehicle schedule

thus forms the basis of the outline service plan, whose implementation needs to be profitable and constructive as well as convenient for staff. The new software system must therefore be capable of:

- constructing vehicle schedules
- creating and printing out service schedules
- transmitting source data to the payroll accounts department
- enabling general workforce planning
- accommodating the three workforce groups: train drivers, passenger service staff and administration staff

THE PROJECT

The prime consideration in selecting the appropriate software was to find the most suitable solution for the metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft's requirements. The company conducted intensive research via the Internet and attended various exhibitions to gain knowledge of systems available on the market before inviting the various suppliers to Uelzen to present their products. The final selection was for the Trapeze products, since these were best suited to the vision of metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft.

Wilmut König, Local Operations Manager for the metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft in Uelzen explains: "When choosing software, many companies only look at the price. We wanted a solution that was the best fit for our requirements, which is why we decided on the

SNAPSHOT

Number of passengers:	50,000 per day
Number of vehicles:	18 double-decker trains, 18 locomotives with 106 coaches
Number of employees:	170, of which 160 in Operations (train drivers and passenger service staff)
Main activities:	Public transport
Trapeze products	Trapeze Bus, Duty Planner, Duty: Block Planner, Absence Planner, Dead Run Month Planner, Report and graphic timetables
Number of passengers:	50,000 per day

Trapeze products. They provide us with exactly what we need. All operational processes are integrated in one structured program. Unlike most other systems that are only designed for buses and trams, the Trapeze software is particularly suited to rail traffic and is able to provide a compact display of rail operations. Another benefit is that the Trapeze program is a tried and tested software program backed up by reliable credentials."

After the initial discussion in spring 2005, the project launched at full throttle, as the system needed to be fully operational with the new timetable in December 2005. The fact that technical requirements and software were ideally suited meant implementation was swift. In addition, the Trapeze System is flexible enough to enable effortless individual customisation. For example, the metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft found the graphic service schedule print-out to be too impractical. Wilmut König comments: "During the course of implementing our project requirements, Trapeze demonstrated that it was an extremely innovative, flexible and cooperative partner. Our wish for an improved service schedule printout was acted upon immediately and implemented in accordance with our standards."

A two-week staff training period took place at the end of the project phase. Wilmut König explains: "Intensive training is always worthwhile. The system's extensive functionality means that it is also demanding. It is easy enough to learn a module, but people need to know more if they are to make maximum use of the system." The new planning and management has been successfully implemented, as planned, since the timetable change in December 2005. The first follow-on projects have been started. One of the parent companies has also adopted the Trapeze solution, another has already expressed an interest in it.

THE TECHNOLOGY

The metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft uses the Trapeze products Bus, Duty, Duty Planner; Block Planner, Absence Planner, Dead Run, Month Planner, Report and graphic timetables. The system is based on client/server architecture and also uses terminal services. As there was no need for the young railway company to take account of any legacy system, the only requirement was to install an interface to the VARIAL payroll accounting program used by the parent company OHE. Other data are taken from Microsoft Access. An initial system upgrade was completed without any problems. Software installation and the necessary small modifications were completed by Trapeze consultants. Wilmut König is enthusiastic: "The product completely

satisfied our expectations. We have also been extremely satisfied with the co-operation received from Trapeze consultants. The support is also excellent and runs very smoothly."

IN PRACTICE

First of all, the vehicle schules are drawn up on the basis of the timetable. Next come the duty schedules, which are constructed using the vehicle schedules and planned one month in advance, before being printed out for staff. This planning considers the efficient and profitable use of available resources (sets of trains, staff) as well as the human element, since happy, friendly employees are the best advertisement for a company. The Trapeze program is a great help to managers, as it shows them the current availability, i.e. balance of hours, weekly working hours, number of shifts etc. of individual members of staff. It is also ideal for ad hoc management, for example, if a member of staff is absent, the manager can see immediately which other members of staff are available for duty or on standby.

The planned employee schedules are later compared with the actual work schedules for payroll accounting purposes. Any resultant operational variations, for example lateness, can accordingly be taken into account. This source data taken from actual services rendered are then automatically transferred to the payroll accounting software in the parent company OHE.

However, day-to-day operations extend well beyond monthly planning and Planned/Actual comparisons. Since the metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft runs on some of the busiest main lines, it is particularly tightly integrated into the overall timetable. A change in the IC timetable sets off a chain reaction. As well as these minor changes to the annual timetable, there are also occasionally construction schedules to take into account, for example, when a section of track is only available as a single track. Trapeze software also enables flexible planning for these timetable and route changes. Last winter, the system passed a fire test with flying colours, when frost caused tracks to crack, forcing the metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft to make operational changes in just a few minutes - no problem with the new system. The Trapeze system provides a complete link from basic operational planning right through to paying staff wages - but it doesn't end there. It contains parallel functionality for additional operational and sales opportunities, like for example, automatic creation of timetables and for printed timetables to be posted directly at stops or stations. This last function is still on the to-do list for the metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft, although there is already a strict timetable for its implementation.

CONCLUSION

The Trapeze system has been tried and tested by the metronom Eisenbahngesellschaft. The entire operational and personnel planning function can now be completed by just three members of staff using the system: the controller, the scheduler and the operations manager. Staff are delighted with the system because it is clear and reliable and because it helps them to work efficiently and save time.

Wilmut König concludes: "For us, it has been well worth investing in Trapeze. We have been impressed with the quality of both the product and the company. They kept every promise they made and project management was excellent."



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