



Finnish Rail

Finding the Ticket for Improving Customer Service



High performance. Delivered.

VR Ltd, or Finnish Rail, is Finland's only rail operator and largest single transportation company. It provides rail freight and passenger services, including some 250 daily long-distance passenger transit and an average of 700 commuter services every day in the Helsinki metropolitan area.

Business Challenge

As Finland's primary passenger rail company, Finnish Rail is always in the public eye and constantly challenged to develop ways to provide the best services possible. As part of the company's sales channel development strategy, Finnish Rail wanted to expand its website services to create a new online ticket store.

This meant Finnish Rail needed a new system that could accommodate the speed, power and flexibility necessary to handle multiple distribution channels for ticket sales. Additionally, the work needed to be completed within an aggressive, short time frame of six months to meet promises made to the public.

"Customer expectations were high," notes Pekka Söderling, Director of Finnish Rail Passenger Services. "This initiative was important to building the Finnish Rail image as an organization that delivers new and dynamic solutions and services to customers."

Finnish Rail considered various solutions and ultimately chose to work with Accenture. What Accenture proposed stood out as the most innovative in that, unlike other rail ticket websites, the solution connected the process of buying tickets to all related parties, such as Finnish Rail ticket offices, vending machines, banks and the Finnish Post.

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— Maarit Laakkonen, Finnish Rail IT manager

Team solution

Accenture worked with Finnish Rail from the creation of the Internet ticket store idea to final implementation. To create the Internet ticket sales system, the two organizations worked together to create a modular and flexible J2EE solution that included the basic functionalities of a ticketing system as well as the technical framework. The solution was designed and implemented according to Finnish Rail's electronic architectures and standards, and runs on a new Web-based infrastructure.

The integration aspect of the project focused on integrating the new online ticketing capability with various internal Finnish Rail systems and interfaces to external systems, such as banks, credit card companies and the Finnish Post. The integration to the existing systems was done using Web services, and Finnish Rail's existing direct TCP/IP connection was used to link from the J2EE environment on Sun Solaris to Cobol modules on the mainframe.

The new integration services now offer the possibility to integrate with all the key programs and components on Finnish Rail's NT and mainframe environments, including timetable and journey information, pricing, seat reservations and the storing of orders to a centralized order database.

A new system does little good if Internet business processes are not fully designed and implemented at the same time. To this end, Accenture worked with many internal Finnish Rail groups to define, implement and deploy entirely new processes and organizational roles for the business management of the system. The joint team also identified changes in existing systems and processes. As a result, more than 1,000 employees — from sales

representatives to conductors to management — learned to use, trust and depend on these new processes, models and system changes.

Finnish Rail's online ticket service was completed on time. "The speed of implementation and the stability of the solution exceeded our expectations," says Maarit Laakkonen, Finnish Rail IT manager. "The volume of calls to our contact center has been low — a testament to the quality of Accenture's work."

"Customers have responded favorably," says Antti Jaatinen, Finnish Rail marketing manager. "They now have an easy way to buy tickets." With online access, Finnish Rail customers can now compare various alternatives at their leisure and buy at the same time.

The Internet ticket sales development was only the first step of Finnish Rail's new sales channels development program. Finnish Rail continues to work with Accenture on ways to implement electronic ticketing, such as through self-printing, mobile phones or conductor hand-held devices. The second phase of Finnish Rail's strategy will focus on business-to-business extranet sales channel development.

Innovation delivered

Today, Finnish Rail boasts one of the most advanced ticket systems in the industry that spans the entire country and supports all distribution channels. The solution administers the entire customer service process from ticket ordering through sales service to customer billing and accounting. As a result, Finnish Rail has experienced improved profitability, improved customer service, lower training costs and a reduction in sales processing time by half.

Working with Accenture, Finnish Rail was able to win international accolades in 1998 for its Opera ticketing sales system, Finnish Rail and Accenture's initial ticketing system. The new capability won the coveted Project of the Year Award from the Finnish Project Management Association and also received a nomination from the prestigious Computerworld Smithsonian Awards.

About Accenture

Accenture is the world's leading management consulting and technology services company. Committed to delivering innovation, Accenture collaborates with its clients to help them realize their visions and create tangible value. With deep industry expertise, broad global resources and proven experience in consulting and outsourcing, Accenture can mobilize the right people, skills, alliances and technologies. With more than 75,000 people in 47 countries, the company generated net revenues of \$11.6 billion for the fiscal year ended August 31, 2002.

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