

AUSTRIAN PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICE (AMS)



“NOW THAT WE HAVE OUR DATA TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE, WE’RE ABLE TO BETTER SERVE OUR CUSTOMERS BY HELPING THEM FIND GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT.”

— HERBERT BÖHM, MEMBER OF AMS BOARD

Tight controls, optimized use of resources, data to support management decisions: as the go-between for job-seekers and employers, the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) must operate like any private-sector company to achieve success.

GATHERING DATA

AMS applies the same rigor to its IT operations. The agency combined the huge volume of data stored in various places into a data warehouse that became a valuable information resource for management decisions. Business intelligence then became a key issue.

“On the IT side, AMS is working toward three main goals”, explains Herbert Böhm, member of the AMS managing board. “First, focusing all our business processes on the customer. Second, self-service via internet. And third, improvement of management-information via Data Warehousing (e.g. pursuing cost control and monitoring of labor market policy).”

KEEPING A TIGHT REIN ON PERFORMANCE

The AMS is measured on length of unemployment, how many long-term unemployed persons have been reintegrated into the world of work, and how many job vacancies have been filled. Labor market policy dictates that the federal states receive funding based on regional need and targets to be achieved. More funding

may be available for more ambitious targets, but the agency must commit to these targets and prove they’ve been met. AMS employee bonuses depend on it.

Because these results and the pathways leading to them are assessed regularly, they needed to be readily available, easily updated, valid, and easy to understand—in a word, transparent. This is underlined by the fact that AMS success can also be measured by external data. The system must also be flexible. Targets change yearly to reflect the changing conditions of the labor market, and AMS is constantly developing the customer base and carrying out more in-depth analyses on such considerations as sustainability.

Cognos solutions helped AMS achieve this transparent and flexible information system, with impressive results. The Minister responsible for the portfolio in 2004 called the AMS “probably the best AMS in Europe.”

AMS SCORECARD

AMS keeps a scorecard for controlling all target-related performance using Cognos Metrics Manager. This scorecard combines labor market targets, processing objectives, and customer objectives into a high level view. The scorecard is available online to all decision-makers and controllers at all managerial levels of AMS, who can regularly check the target achievement levels and delve into detailed analyses in the Cognos PowerPlay OLAP cubes of the AMS data warehouse.

CORPORATE CUSTOMERS

The AMS data warehouse also supplies key information that lets managers and corporate customer care staff to respond in the best possible way to the needs of their customers. This ability has become increasingly important because AMS—like any private enterprise—is aiming to increase its market share. Thanks to the data warehouse, AMS has a clear overview of all customers and can classify each customer by region, type of business, recruiting behavior, and so on. This makes it easy to segment customers and identify the service's top customers based on a flexible array of criteria, which is possible through the OLAP analysis options in Cognos cubes. This information helps AMS optimize its customer relationship management.

CONTROL OF FUNDING BUDGET

The second main area that requires strict control is regulating the use of the approximately 700 million euro of public funds that AMS receives every year. The money is there so that AMS can help jobseekers find work. The organization also wants to help employers to recruit. The allocation, reporting, and controlling of these public funds used to be a complex task. The organization had to supply data to nine state offices, 100 regional offices, and national headquarters. It also had to send data to external institutions on disparate systems, such as the Federal Data Processing Centre, the Federal Office for Social Welfare and the Disabled, and the PSK (Austria's Post Office Giro Bank). Now, budgetary control of the appropriation is exercised using an SAP application in AMS, whereby the SAP/BW is used as a "data pump" in order to enable the efficient combinations of budget information and data relating to people to be held in the data warehouse.

OPTIMIZING THE USE OF RESOURCES

AMS is focusing more and more on using data to better allocate funding. Cognos solutions have helped them do this by measuring the effectiveness of their actions. The data warehouse now delivers regular, detailed, and custom data that lets AMS monitor the financial assistance it provides its customers. The AMS can measure performance by criteria such as employment rates and new job placements. It is also possible to compare the effectiveness of measures

supporting different groups (by sex, age, educational background, region, or any other relevant demographic attributes).

'Before and after' comparisons make clear the effectiveness of the funding. The AMS compares the time a person has spent in gainful employment before and after that person took part in AMS-sponsored activities. The flexibility of the Cognos cubes lets control groups, such as AMS customers who have not received special measures (in a comparable period), be easily integrated at any time. Quantitative statistical methods can also be applied.

The project is of tremendous significance because AMS spends more than 700 million euro a year. The agency must show that this public money is used effectively and that customers receive the most suitable and effective form of assistance to get them back into employment. At the 2004 EU Peer Review Programme, this program was unique in Europe. The EU Executive Summary stated that the Austrian example was "in the vanguard of this development because of its comprehensiveness and user-friendliness."

MONITORING CAREER PATHS

AMS also monitors the career paths of Austria's gainfully employed population by region, type of business, type of work, and demographic attributes. This information helps the service define those areas in which job-seekers have the best chances of finding work—a key measure for the analysis of the labor market. Creating a forward-looking labor market and employment policy relies heavily on constant observation of developments in the labor market and early identification of those groups of people whose jobs may be at greater risk.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

There are more than 500 data cubes of 700 GB with a total (gross) memory of 1.3 terabytes for the data warehouse operation, including databank and cube updating. There are more than 4,000 potential web users, 2 x 12 CPUs with 900 and 1200 MHz (SPARC 3) Sun Fire K 12 and Informix database management software. The approximately 100 PowerPlay clients or Cognos Impromptu users will be migrated when the PowerPlay WebServer is gradually replaced by the web capability of Cognos 8.

THE COGNOS SOLUTION FOLLOWS THE AMS IT STRATEGY

AMS needed a solution that would meet a set of “hard” technical requirements, such as simple generation of HTML formats, availability of web-based software, and easy data maintenance. But it also wanted a vendor with an international footprint and reference projects. AMS found what it was looking for in Cognos, and currently uses Impromptu, Transformer and PowerPlay.

Even users with little previous experience on databases were able to work quickly and independently with the new solution – another tribute to the flexibility of the Cognos software. There is no need for complex queries. The necessary parameters can be modified quickly. And interrelated questions can be answered rapidly.

INTERNET SERVICES AND COGNOS 8

The data warehouse is in terms of its extent, depth and utilization the central management information system of AMS and is in this sense being constantly expanded. It holds the data from all of the important areas such as targets, AMS official unemployment figures, job vacancies, employment of foreign nationals, assistance provided and the appropriation budget, data for the European Social Fund, insurance benefits (job-seeker benefit payments, etc), corporate customers, AMS call center and special issues such as monitoring (provided by the Cognos OLAP function).

Plans are in place to extend the data on the AMS self-service automats—SAMSOMAT—the touch-screen kiosk system for jobseekers at 250 locations in Austria.

An extranet solution for government authorities and external institutes, devised in conjunction with the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Employment, will provide access to important labor market data (<https://arbeitsmarktdatenbank.at>). This is powered by Cognos OLAP cubes using Cognos 8.

But the most significant new data warehouse project is the complete changeover to Cognos 8 (C8). With this change, AMS will enjoy the full benefits of the new solution, the most important of which is the complete integration of the full web capability of Analysis Studio and Report Studio, which will be fully compatible with the overall AMS IT strategy.

ABOUT COGNOS

Cognos, the world leader in business intelligence and performance management solutions, provides world-class enterprise planning and BI software and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance.

Cognos brings together technology, analytical applications, best practices, and a broad network of partners to give customers a complete performance system. The Cognos performance system is an open and adaptive solution that leverages an organization's ERP, packaged applications, and database investments. It gives customers the ability to answer the questions – How are we doing? Why are we on or off track? What should we do about it? – and enables them to understand and monitor current performance while planning future business strategies.

Cognos serves more than 23,000 customers in more than 135 countries, and its top 100 enterprise customers consistently outperform market indexes. Cognos performance management solutions and services are also available from more than 3,000 worldwide partners and resellers. For more information, visit the Cognos Web site at <http://www.cognos.com>.



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