

BKK BUNDESVERBAND

COGNOS BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE SOLUTION BRINGS GREATER FLEXIBILITY TO THE BKK BUNDESVERBAND'S DATA WAREHOUSE



“IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER THE BKK BUNDESVERBAND IS CONFRONTED BY CHANGING LEGAL GUIDELINES OR BY NEW REPORTING REQUIREMENTS ON THE PART OF USERS, COGNOS SOLUTIONS ENSURE THE SYSTEM CAN BE CONFIGURED IN THE WAY THAT WE NEED. AS THE SYSTEM IS ADMINISTERED CENTRALLY ON ONE OF THE BKK BUNDESVERBAND'S WEB SERVERS, ANY MODIFICATIONS MADE ARE NOW IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE BKK NETWORK.”

**– MANFRED LATSCH, PROJECT MANAGER AT THE BKK BUNDESVERBAND
(BUNDESVERBAND DER BETRIEBLICHEN KRANKENKASSEN)**

The German healthcare system currently faces a real test of its strength. At the heart of the debate are the statutory health insurance providers (or ‘Krankenkassen’), which patients expect to be reliable partners providing high-quality healthcare at an affordable price. At the same time, doctors and hospitals are fighting to ensure that their rapidly rising costs are covered in full, and the Krankenkassen are also having to compete with private providers for the most profitable customers. As the umbrella association for many of these insurance providers, the BKK Bundesverband (Bundesverband der Betriebskrankenkassen) therefore faces a number of challenges. Not only must it implement a set of constantly changing legal requirements, but it also has to provide its member organisations with a continual stream of commercial and market information that is vital to their competitiveness. Since adopting the Cognos reporting solution, however, the BKK Bundesverband has had access to a new, flexible and user-friendly information platform that fulfils both current and future requirements for efficient and effective knowledge transfer. This platform is known as the BKK InfoNet Web.

The BKK Bundesverband (Bundesverband der Betriebskrankenkassen) is the umbrella organisation for its 199 member organisations and their eight regional federations. With around 14 million people covered by their policies, its members – the ‘Betriebskrankenkassen’ (roughly translated as ‘works health insurers’) or ‘BKKs’ – represent the third largest (and oldest) grouping of statutory health insurance providers in Germany. For more than 250 years these organisations have been closely involved in the provision of healthcare services, allowing both blue-collar and white-collar workers to sleep peacefully without having to worry about reaching old age or suffering from unexpected illnesses or accidents. And the popularity of the BKKs continues today as more and more people become members, having had the right since 1996 to choose their insurance provider.

The BKK Bundesverband handles statutory issues and other tasks on behalf of its members, while representing their interests in a variety of forums. In its capacity as a ‘clearing house’, the federation also organises and oversees the sharing of data with the individual BKKs. As part of this process, all service providers in the healthcare sector, from doctors and

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pharmacists to clinics and hospitals, send their data on the services provided to BKK patients to the umbrella organisation. Sent via electronic means, this data includes prescriptions, diagnoses, payments and bills. The BKK Bundesverband then passes the documentation and billing data to the various member BKKs, as well as providing the strategic information that is vital to their management of services and costs.

“To help us keep a handle on the massive and constantly growing amounts of information, and manage these reliably, we set up a large-scale Teradata data warehouse for sharing data with the various BKKs,” explains Manfred Latsch, Project Manager at the BKK Bundesverband. “Since 1998 the BKK InfoNet has been a central application for us, one that stores all of the sensitive billing data from the BKKs and supplies both pre-defined standard reports and ad hoc analyses.”

A WAY OUT OF THE INFORMATION OVERLOAD

The BKK Bundesverband’s information management system was originally designed for a client-server architecture, and was generally highly reliable in satisfying users’ needs. However, it was increasingly running into functional and technical limitations, due primarily to information overload. The federation therefore began to look for a specifically Web-based business intelligence solution that would bring new functionalities to the existing InfoNet tool and add value in terms of flexibility and ease of use. “Our users’ requirements could no longer be fulfilled with the existing traditional client-server solution, as this relatively inflexible system had not kept pace with the rapid rate of change facing the Krankenkassen today,” explains Latsch. “The previous InfoNet system offered only two main functions: first, it generated and distributed standard analyses, and second it provided data models for ad hoc analyses. If we were to carry on working economically in the long term for the federation’s members, we had to find a way of meeting our needs for more extensive decision-support tools, which would give us and our members a lot more flexibility.” For tasks related to service verification,

supply of information to those insured, or the analysis of the amounts spent on drugs, for instance, a dynamic and user-friendly reporting system was needed that would offer users several options for selecting content and specifying parameters.

When investigating the market for suitable reporting solutions, one of BKK Bundesverband’s priorities was that all functions should be user-friendly and capable of being operated intuitively. The user interfaces also needed to be set up without significant time spent on installing, maintaining, and supporting the system at the various locations where it was used. Their reasoning was that due to the wide geographical distribution of the BKKs, such a model would in itself bring major cost savings in terms of training and system administration requirements. This would be crucial in keeping down the costs of transferring information across the federation. “With the previous InfoNet solution this hadn’t been the case for some time, with standard reports and data models having to be developed centrally by staff at the BKK Bundesverband. The key factor we were looking for was efficient distribution,” continues Latsch. “Around every six months, new releases would be issued that we’d have to burn to CD and send out to the 1,000 or so users at the various local BKKs. This was highly time-consuming and inefficient.”

After intensive examination of the options available from a number of vendors, the BKK Bundesverband decided to opt for Cognos. “The fact that the Cognos business intelligence solution was so clearly Web-oriented was what really won us over. The software has allowed us to lift the BKK InfoNet tool onto a new platform with an innovative architecture, one that’s based on a real zero footprint design. Installing software and updates on the various local client machines – which was time-consuming and could lead to errors – is now a thing of the past. All you need is a browser to be able to access all of the reporting functions and data,” explains Latsch. “ReportNet therefore convinced us as a solution that was Web-based from the bottom up, one that’s not just a client-server solution that’s been tweaked for the Web.”

BOOSTING THE BKK INFONET WEB

In 2004, the BKK Bundesverband embarked upon the gradual introduction of the Cognos application. Manfred Latsch has an especially positive opinion of the stable server operation throughout this implementation period, and also points to the effective support provided by Cognos during the customising and installation of ReportNet and the redevelopment of the BKK InfoNet Web.

“The Cognos technology allows us to run new, flexible types of analyses, giving a precise picture of past spending. These also enable us to identify possible future trends – something that’s vital in helping us to grow the amounts received in terms of contributions. The new BKK InfoNet Web also lets us check even the smallest details of individual cases, while complying with any data protection requirements, needless to say,” adds Manfred Latsch. He also emphasises the dynamic way in which the new business intelligence system grows in line with new user requirements and any changes in the legal framework. Thanks to the fact that systems are administered centrally on one of the BKK Bundesverband’s Web servers, the days of sending out CDs to local members are now a thing of the past. Any appropriate updates that are needed can be implemented quickly and flexibly at any time.

The BKK Bundesverband could also rely on the co-operation of the Cognos partners involved. “We’re very happy with the Teradata database,” Latsch explains. “Right from the outset, our InfoNet tool was based on Teradata’s data warehouse technology, which supplies all of the data reliably, from the one billion data records on outpatient diagnoses and three billion records of particular treatments provided, to the five to six-hundred million prescription records.”

The boost given to the BKK InfoNet Web has enabled the BKK Bundesverband and its 199 members to enjoy a wide range of benefits. Now, for example, a greater number of decision-makers and administrators have access to ready-made standard reports and analyses that are also more up-to-date and detailed than before. In addition, every BKK can now use the tool so as to create, independently, the analyses they need in accordance with freely selectable business models.

This applies whether the tool is used by accountants or administrators, and whether it’s used for releasing additional payments or implementing bonus programmes for chronically or severely ill patients. “ReportNet makes researching easier in every way,” says Manfred Latsch. “Without spending any significant time on programming you can obtain the business information you need extremely easily. The user enters a couple of filters and immediately receives lists of results including detailed service overviews – even if he or she is searching for particular care homes and clinics in particular regions.” The BKK Bundesverband was also convinced by the easy and secure operation of the Cognos business intelligence solution. For the majority of the 17,000 or so users, the system is self-explanatory. The user manual can be accessed online, and special training courses are only needed for advanced users. The organisation has also avoided the time and effort involved in installing additional software tools or plug-ins for data analysis at the various users’ locations. All that is required is a standard Web browser, which saves time, nerves and money – both now and longer-term.

CONCLUSION

With the Cognos solutions, the BKK Bundesverband was able to achieve substantially greater flexibility in its data warehousing activities. The new BKK InfoNet Web now reaches up to 17,000 users, who benefit from additional business intelligence functionalities, a range of options for the production of reports, integration with the organisation's existing security model, and reporting interfaces that are extremely easy to use. At all times, all users have access to the same information and up-to-date reports and analyses. Overall, this efficient provision of decision-support material is proving to be essential in helping the BKKs to remain competitive.

ABOUT COGNOS

Cognos is the world leader in business intelligence and enterprise planning software. Our solutions for corporate performance management let organizations drive performance with planning, budgeting and consolidation, monitor it with scorecarding, and understand it with business intelligence reporting and analysis. Cognos is the only vendor to support all of these key management activities in a complete, integrated solution. Founded in 1969, Cognos now serves more than 23,000 customers in over 135 countries.



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