



Integrated Portal Supports HST's Strategic Plans for One-Stop-Shopping and Cross-Selling

HST Groep is a transport and logistics service provider based in the Netherlands. Founded in 1978, HST Groep has grown into an international multi-discipline, multi-modal freight carrier, with business units providing a wide range of transport—sea, air and road—and warehousing services. The company has 270 full time employees and an annual turnover of €40 million.

HST's three ISO-certified road-transport units operate a modern fleet of 80 trucks, together with trailers and container chassis. Every vehicle has an ADR permit (for transporting hazardous goods internationally) and is equipped with an onboard computer and communications.

The company's warehousing and value-added logistics unit has access to 29,600 m² of storage capacity spread over four warehouses, and with room for 8,500 pallets and 1,100 chemical storage places.

Finding the Right Application to Support a New Strategy

As part of a strategic move, HST is gearing up to offer customers a one-stop-shop for its full range of transport and logistic services, while profiting internally from cross selling these services across all its business units. Importantly, such a move needs the support of information and communication technology (ICT).

Henk Pieffers, operations manager at HST Transmissions, the business unit responsible for road transport within Benelux, was involved in implementing HST Online five years ago. This online application supports Transmissions' own operations and that of its customers, and was an obvious candidate to support HST's new strategy.

However, HST Online is not web-based and does not use standard browser software. "Although HST Online continues to serve us well, it also means manually installing and maintaining the application software on our customers' computers, all 150 of them."

Highlights

- Significant improvement in sales support can double HST's turnover
- Improved efficiency reduces HST's operational costs
- Reduced HST's customer-support costs, and customer's business costs using self-service portal
- Reduced design and development effort and costs through Mendix App Platform
- Lower maintenance costs because of Portal design-uniformity and web based platform

Mendix App

- The Portal application is designed, developed and deployed using: Mendix Business Modeler (design & development); Mendix Business Server (deployment); and Mendix Web client (portal-type user interface)
- Data exchange between the Portal and HST's warehouse back-office system, Navision, and the three HST transport management systems is handled by the Enterprise Service Bus

Implementation Partner

- CAPE Groep



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Henk Pieffers
Operations Manager
HST Transmissions

There were other reasons why HST needed a brand-new application. It was looking for an application to be used by all business units. This meant an application with wider functionality than what HST Online offered, and one that also fulfilled the requirements of HST's other business units and disciplines.

Crucially, this application would be required to support and facilitate HCT's two salespersons in selling to 500-600 clients, across all business units, and involving different business requirements. And "with internet-access fairly wide-spread at our customers' premises nowadays, the new application had to be a web-based portal," says Pieffers.

A User-friendly Development Platform with a Future

In 2008, HST commissioned CAPE Groep, a Dutch IT and management consultancy active in the transport and logistics sector, to investigate, design, develop and install such an application.

"We recommended the Mendix platform mainly because it offers a fast and user-friendly way of designing, developing and deploying web-based applications, and without having to write and test computer code," says Pieter Verkroost, a business consultant at CAPE Groep and manager of the HST project. "Mendix allows you to change and re-run your application in just a few clicks. And it is a strategic tool and future-proof because it is based on such state-of-the-art concepts as business modeling and service-oriented architecture."

A joint CAPE-HST design and development team, consisting largely of business consultants, started work in mid-2008. The first phase of the project, the warehousing module, is in its pilot phase at the time of this case, with general rollout expected to start in mid-2009. The international and national road transport module (which will eventually replace HST Online) is being developed, and rollout is expected in late-2009. Development work on the sea- and airfreight modules will begin soon after.

Operational Excellence and Significant Turn-over Growth

Commenting on the current functionality of the Portal, "In addition to placing delivery orders from their own stock in our warehouses, customers can also check stock-levels, make changes, or track at real-time the movements of their goods through the various warehousing stages and processes," says Pieffers.

A key part of the Portal is its business-rules engine. "This software processes orders according to a set of predefined business rules for handling such things as price (based on pre-agreed margin limits), and preferred carrier and routing," explains Pieffers. "The engine also selects the applicable HST transport management system (each transport business unit has its own back-office system) to handle a particular order. All this makes it possible to automate the order process."

Once the Portal is fully implemented and running according to our expectations, and with most clients connected, I believe our own operational quality and cost-savings and that of our customers will improve significantly. I also believe HST will then be able to double its turnover — though efficient and effective cross selling, for example — but without increasing indirect manpower resources.

Henk Pieffers
Operations Manager
HST Transmissions

Another notable feature is the 'intelligent' transport-order function. "Based on vehicle and route, this function calculates the amount of CO₂ a particular order will generate," says Pieffers. "And based on past customer orders and delivery patterns, this function will also recommend, if necessary, revised, more efficient and ecologically friendlier delivery options. In addition to helping the environment, this could also make good business and financial sense to all parties concerned."

Such a self-service portal is a win-win proposition, benefiting HST as well as its customers: "Once the Portal is fully implemented and running according to our expectations, and with most clients connected, I believe our operational quality and cost-savings will improve significantly, and so will our customers," says Pieffers. "I also believe HST will then be able to double its turnover — through more efficient and effective cross selling, for example — but without increasing indirect manpower resources."

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