

MODERN APPS FOR MOBILE WORKERS

When you're one of the world's biggest rail operators, staying on top means keeping an eye on opportunities. And when your drivers wish for a mobile application to support their work, you turn to an expert in mobility and rail solutions. The Société Nationale des Chemins de fer Français (SNCF), which operates France's rail systems, turned to CSC.

The rail operator, whose drivers first requested a mobile app at an innovation workshop, asked CSC to help define the project. It would entail supporting — from both a business and a technology standpoint — the country's 16,000 drivers of high-speed, regional, public transport and freight trains.

"We won this project thanks to our deep knowledge of the transportation industry, as well as our expertise in reengineering business processes while designing and implementing mobile solutions and technologies," says Christophe Lienhard, partner with CSC's Transportation practice in France.

"We began by providing management consulting and mobility expertise to analyze the train-driving processes — namely, mission preparation, execution and report — as well as the associated administrative and economic processes. Our goal was to determine what a mobile solution could improve, while strictly complying with professional and safety rules, such as train regularity, speed limitations and avoiding service disruptions."

With the project, SNCF wanted to improve efficiency, reduce its environmental footprint, and increase responsiveness and flexibility in the exchange of information between the company, drivers, and their management.

For example, before departing, drivers have to print out and gather documents — such as weekly and daily plans, speed limit tables and special alerts — which they use during their trips.



At the end of their shifts, they have to hand write mission reports that detail information such as realized schedules and problems encountered.

Less paper, fewer errors

With the new system, drivers can use PDAs to obtain and review the information they need to prepare their trips. Through a GPS and a scrolling timetable, pertinent information automatically scrolls on the screen as the system follows the driver's progress. During their shifts, drivers have access to pre-filled mission reports, which they can modify, if needed, and then send as soon as they have finished their routes. This means less paper, more timely information, no manual mission reports to scan, correct and modify — and thus, fewer errors.

After CSC designed and implemented the solution, SNCF teams integrated it with their IT environment and now operate the solution. By following a pragmatic path, a step-by-step approach was developed to manage the project. First, an experiment was conducted to see if users would gain benefits from the new system, and to validate the scope, solutions and challenges involved. Then the solution was industrialized, back up plans defined, support functions implemented, and rollout and business change management activities prepared. After completing system testing, a pilot phase began at the end of 2009, followed by the rollout of the first version now underway.

A user-driven request

"The origin of the project was an idea from the train drivers," says Jean-Aimé Mougnot, SNCF director of the train drivers' Human Resources department. "They imagined a tool that would improve their work environment and were highly involved in its definition and implementation, with more than 400 drivers participating, from the first steps to the beginning of the rollout phase."

"This solution takes us a major step forward in modernizing the train drivers' activity, enabling them to better achieve operational excellence in what is becoming a more competitive and challenging environment for SNCF, all while contributing to sustainable development." ■