

CASE STUDY

Thameslink integration

 <https://www.thameslinkrailway.com/>



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Integrating systems for a new Train Operating Company franchise is not an easy job. You only get a few weeks to plan the integration, and 6 hours to complete the very complex carveout of systems and IT processes.

THE BUSINESS CASE

Back in spring 2014, the Go-Ahead Group was awarded the franchise for GTR (Govia Thameslink Railway). We only had 4 months to plan and a Saturday night to implement the carveout of all systems from the previous owner.

When awarded a new train franchise, there is an expectation that all operational systems, including retail, commercial and marketing, operations, engineering, HR and Finance, reporting, etc will be operational from the early hours of the Sunday when the franchise starts operating under new ownership.

This is a huge task and one that needs to be planned well. It is a bit like heart surgery to the franchise.

METHODOLOGY

Winning the GTR franchise was terribly exciting. But it was daunting in equal measure. The award was announced on the 23th of May and all IT systems had to be ready for the 14th of September, less than 4 months later, with the summer season in the middle.

One of the first decisions was that we should be avoiding Transitional Service Agreements (TSAs) if possible. And, of course, everything had to be run by the new franchise and the new branding from the 14th of September. This included complex projects like RDG licencing, Smartcards, acquiring, PCI-DSS accreditations, and Rail operations systems.

As the person responsible for this integration, my approach was based on early collaboration with the suppliers of these systems, and detailed planning of the task ahead, supported by strong governance. The planning went from weekly at the beginning, to daily for the last 4 weeks, to hourly for the night of the cutover.

Going home on Sunday 15th September at 9.00am and seeing our trains working to timetable, and our branding in all TVMs and station screens was an exhilarating feeling and a profound sense of an achievement.

RESULTS

- All systems were up and running with no disruption to the operation at 8.00am on the day that the franchise started on the 14th September 2014.
- No need for Transitional Service Agreements.
- Great team boost (and party) once the task was completed.

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The key is in the detail planning and stakeholder management