



EWSTEAMS UP WITH TRANSEO FOR EXPERT IT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

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Guy Mason, EWS, Chief Information Officer

The background

EWS (English Welsh & Scottish Railway Ltd) is the largest rail operator in Britain and the country's only rail freight operator to provide a complete national service with access to continental Europe through the Channel Tunnel.

Launched in 1996, following the acquisition of four divisions of British Rail's rail freight operations (Rail Express Systems, Loadhaul, Transrail Freight and Mainline Freight), the company currently operates more than 8,000 services each week, delivered by nearly 500 locomotives with over 14,000 wagons.

EWS is part of a group owned by EWS Holdings Ltd that includes EWS International, Euro Cargo Rail. Engineering Support Group, Railway Approvals Ltd, Marcroft Engineering Ltd. and Axiom Rail.

The challenge

Privatisation is all about driving value and efficiency through open competition. So it is something of a paradox that the privatisation of rail created, if not a monopoly for the provision of IT services, then, at the very least, a highly restricted market.

“Although the privatisation process created multiple rail companies, these new operators had very little choice in IT service providers,” explained EWS Chief Information Officer Guy Mason. “It was a real struggle to get good value.”

“At EWS, we wanted a provider with a culture similar to our own: responsive, customer-focused and really hungry for the business.”

In its drive towards improved value, greater flexibility and faster response times, EWS turned its attention to a fledgling partnership that existed between one of its own businesses and Thales, a leading global electronics and information systems supplier with specialist expertise in the transport sector.

Early collaborations between the two companies had already resulted in a number of successes, not least of which was an Online Journey Planner for National Rail Enquiries. This web site, which now attracts an average of more than one million visits every day, is believed to be the most frequently used travel site in all of the UK.

Realising that the combination of Thales's advanced IT systems integration skills and EWS's unrivalled knowledge of the rail business was the perfect platform for a custom-built IT service, the company acted to formalise the partnership by creating Transeo.

"The Transeo decision gave us a low risk, high gain solution," said Guy. It gave us broad access to all the IT skills and resources that we needed, backed with in-depth knowledge of the rail sector and cost-effective performance levels. It was a perfect fit for us."

The solution

As part of the deal, Transeo assumed full responsibility for supplying the company's Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure services in the UK and also in France. For a quicker start up, EWS's entire infrastructure support team was transferred to Thales, which runs the ICT service on behalf of Transeo.

Across the UK, Transeo now supports over 4,000 EWS end-users at 120 different sites, all linked together via an innovative Voice over IP (VoIP) converged network service, which serves around 1700 PCs, laptops and PDAs.

The operational delivery team is based alongside a new, purpose-designed data centre in Doncaster, which will be able to host as many as 450 Intel-based servers; including dedicated small form factor machines that provide discrete application services, blade servers for scalable server-based computing and application delivery, and large multiprocessor systems for handling the core server virtualisation and database infrastructure.

24/7 multilingual help desk and support is available for all EWS employees, including those at Eurocargo Rail and Axiom Rail.

The benefits

Less than a year into the new relationship the benefits were already being realised. Uptime was higher than ever; support - from both Doncaster and Paris - was first rate and service levels were being met uniformly.

Today, EWS is benefiting from a far more flexible and responsive IT service with a predictable cost model and contractually guaranteed service levels. It means that the company can maintain a focus on its core objectives of growing the business and extending its position in the UK rail industry, knowing that its IT infrastructure is not only fit for purpose but fit for the future, too.

The future

Transeo's Thales parentage offers additional benefits which are likely to become increasingly important as time goes by. As well as enjoying considerable buying power, the high-tech group has the potential to draw on a huge pool of cutting-edge IT skills (it has more than 22,000 research and development engineers around the world) that covers every major discipline.

In addition, Transeo has excellent European links and resources; a fact that is likely to play a key part in the continuing growth of a company that has its sights set firmly on international expansion.

Service description

- Fully managed provision of IT services and infrastructure

Service details

- Purpose-designed data centre in Doncaster
- Up to 450 Intel-based servers
- 4,000+ end users
- 120 different sites
- Voice over IP (VoIP) converged network service
- Approximately 1700 PCs, laptops and PDAs
- Multilingual 24/7 help desk

Business benefits

- Reduced operating costs
- Greater flexibility
- Guaranteed service levels
- Fewer interruptions
- Supports international growth plans
- Improved user satisfaction
- A resilient, flexible, future-proof IT infrastructure