BKK Bundesverband

"Whether the BKK Bundesverband is confronted by changing legal guidelines or by new reporting requirements from users, Cognos solutions ensure that 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 der Betrieblichen Krankenkassen

BKK Bundesverband customer success

The BKK Bundesverband der Betrieblichen Krankenkassen (Bundesverband) is the umbrella health insurance organization for 199 member organizations and their eight regional federations. With around 14 million people covered by their policies, its members, the BKKs, represent the oldest and third largest grouping of statutory health insurance providers in Germany. For more than 250 years, these organizations 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. The popularity of the BKKs continues today as more and more people become members.

Challenges faced

The German healthcare system currently faces a real test of its strength. Patients expect the Krankenkassen 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 also have to compete with private providers for the most profitable customers.

As the umbrella association for many of these insurance providers, the BKK Bundesverband must implement a set of constantly changing legal requirements, and also has to provide its member organizations with a continual stream of commercial and market information that is vital to their competitiveness. As part of the clearinghouse process, all service providers in the healthcare sector, from doctors and pharmacists to clinics and hospitals, send their data to the federation electronically—prescriptions, diagnoses, payments, and

Industry:
Health insurance

Geography:
• Germany

Information Needs:
• Flexibility, ease of use, and control for a data warehouse of many billions of data records

Platforms:
• Teradata Warehouse

Users:
• 17,000 users

Solutions:
• Cognos 8 BI

Benefits:
• Organization-wide, flexible access to the same, detailed, up-to-date information for decision makers

• Improved user satisfaction and confidence through access to ready-made reports and analyses

• Savings in cost and time through central administration and eliminating software CD distribution

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.

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: the BKK InfoNet Web.

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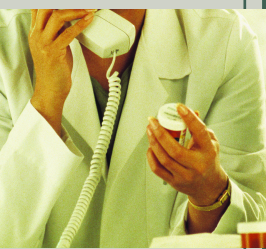
Strategy followed

"To help us keep a handle on the massive and constantly growing amounts of information and manage it 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, storing all of the sensitive billing data from the BKKs and supplying both pre-defined standard reports and ad hoc analyses."

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 began to look for a specifically Web-based business intelligence (BI) solution that would bring new functionality to the existing InfoNet tool and add value in terms of flexibility and ease of use.

"Our relatively inflexible system had not kept pace with the rapid rate of change facing the Krankenkassen today," explains Latsch. "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."

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 user locations. With the wide geographical distribution of the BKKs, such a model would in itself bring major cost savings in terms of training and system administration.

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 BI 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 based on a real zero-footprint design," explains Latsch. "Cognos Reporting was the answer, since it is Web-based from the bottom up, not just a client-server solution tweaked for the Web."

Benefits realized

In 2004, the BKK Bundesverband embarked upon the gradual introduction of the Cognos solution. 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 customizing and installation of Cognos Reporting 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. The Cognos solution also enables us to identify possible future trends—something vital in helping us to increase contributions," adds Manfred Latsch.

The BKK Bundesverband can also rely on the cooperation of the Cognos partners.

"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 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, 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 to create the analyses they need independently from selectable business models.

"Cognos Reporting 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."

With the Cognos solution, the BKK Bundesverband has been able to achieve substantially greater flexibility in its data warehousing activities. The new BKK InfoNet Web now reaches 17,000 users, who benefit from additional BI functionality, a range of options for the production of reports, integration with the organization'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.

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