

»The collaboration has gone so smoothly that only a few optimizations were needed.«

The Landesamt für Steuern Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony State Tax Office) is responsible for the inspection and support of the Lower Saxony financial offices in the management of federal and state taxes (except excise taxes). It is also responsible for the professional training and continuing education at the Steuerakademie Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony Finance Academy). It is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance and is therefore the IT service provider for of the Lower Saxony tax administration. Primary tasks include the development, use and care of all IT applications used daily in the two finance departments of the Landesamt, the 67 finance offices and the finance academy project and resource management solution Blue Ant has been in use by the Landesamt für Steuern Niedersachsen since the end of 2005.

We spoke with central project manager Ralf Engel and his resource manager Thomas Jahn about their experiences with introducing the web-based solution.



## Case Study

**Mr. Jahn, could you sum up your area of expertise at the Landesamt für Steuern Niedersachsen?**

I am responsible for the resource management in the financial computing centre (FRZ). Among other things, my tasks include the organization and care of all employee data in Blue Ant, taking care of the so-called Skill Catalogue, editing resource requests, consulting on projects in staff recruiting and coordinating personnel placement. Resource management is a central support process that sustains and relieves project management, ICT advanced training management, executives and of course employees.

**Mr. Engel, what tasks do you perform within the Landesamt für Steuern Niedersachsen?**

I am responsible for the project management process at the FRZ. My responsibilities include the coordination of internal projects within the portfolio management. I take care of the requirements for project work. My tasks are to look after the project management handbook, support the project head, portfolio management, compiling overviews, product management for Blue Ant MPM solution, and setting up projects.

**Mr. Engel, what does the office require in terms of project management?**

Project management controls the Lower Saxony tax administration for the FRZ, including definition, planning, implementation, and completion of new information and communication projects (ICT projects), as well as surveillance and controlling at the portfolio level (controlling). It accounts for the project course of ICT technical principles, compliance with the minimum requirements of the courts of audit for the implementation of ICT projects and is based on the procedure model of the Federal Ministry of the Interior. With regard to the planning and implementation of ICT projects, the project management unifies our procedures.

**Mr. Engel, what were the goals behind supporting project and resource management with a software solution?**

After project goals have been defined and these goals have been made interdependent, it is necessary to visualize the results. Another requirement was to create a knowledge database (skills catalogue), to optimize the efficiency of our operations. A positive side effect is that certain key players are not always assigned to all projects, since, notably, a request for resources in the FRZ was excluded.

The external resource assignment is also controlled by the resource management

(resource manager and approval process). This ensures that external capacity can be planned and controlled in accordance with internal resources.

The introduction of the resource management should give us a transparent overview of the financial computing centre's (FRZ) available knowledge. We use this to identify the project manager and project employees with the greatest possible competency in relation to different skills. Strategically, this is of great importance to our personnel development.

**Mr Jahn, which interaction between resources and knowledge management has emerged in project management?**

By introducing a pure knowledge request for project employees, the FRZ's current employees can be won on as project employees, whereas the requested knowledge wasn't known before. This leads to a reduction in workload for our central knowledge carriers.

**Why did you decide on Blue Ant as your supporting tool?**

Because FRZ develops different system platforms, we could only consider a web-based tool. Due to the possibility of customizing the tool, we were able to lower the cost for its configuration. We decided to go with the most economical solution after a tendering process.

proventis GmbH preconfigured the tool. This involved accommodating approximately 200 users, FRZ-specific customizing and setting up the rights system. In cooperation with FRZ, Blue Ant was installed and the administrators and first-time users were trained. At this time, about 80 employees work actively in Blue Ant. About 30 project heads use the project planning and controlling functions in Blue Ant for their projects.

**Where there specific requirements relating to your method of operation and how were these met?**

Requests from different departments were directed to the central project manager. These were, for example, the illustration of a network plan, illustrating planned values in the knowledge databank search result lists, comparing multiple basis plans, as well as the use of ftp links for document management. These requests were internally tuned and finally requested to proventis GmbH as necessary customizations or changes. Some of these changes have already been implemented. Because the collaboration has gone so smoothly, there are only a few optimizations needed. We've experienced an active continuous improvement process with proventis GmbH.

**Thank you for talking to us Mr. Engel and Mr. Jahn.**