

Human Resource Management for the Retail Industry – Up-to-Date Information Across the Globe!



The roughly 50,000 employees all have the same motto. H&M has expanded immensely in recent years; there are now a total of 1,244 stores in 22 countries.

Germany is the company's biggest market, followed by Sweden and the UK. This year will almost certainly see further growth and development.

At the H&M (Hennes & Mauritz AB) headquarters in Stockholm, managers have been concerned with how to improve a personnel- and sales planning system. In 2003 a determined search began for a centralized, multilingual and truly flexible system that could present and compare data conveniently and comprehensibly.

Looking for the Ideal Solution

At the CeBIT 2003 (Hanover, Germany) a number of different providers and solutions were closely examined. However, it soon became clear that only an individually customized product would work for H&M.

A commission made up of employees from a range of company positions in different countries outlined the necessary functions in a requirements catalog, which was then used as the basis of discussion with those providers that came closest to the profile. After a preparation phase granted to the providers, the various systems were installed and tested according to the requirements catalog. The members of the commission team were then able to test the systems or watch presentations to get an idea of how the software works and is used. After a final presentation before the

decision-making board in Stockholm, the choice was made: F-IT won the contract. The decision was based on F-IT's credible experience in planning projects of all kinds combined with their expertise in implementing them on an international scale.

Realizing and Implementing the Project

A team made up of users, shop controllers, and managers elaborated the technical and operative requirements. Developers and project managers of F-IT complemented the team. Together, the basic working processes, data content, the structures, and necessary reports, the system architecture and technologies were all discussed and compiled into a first planning document.

Five weeks later, the master application was already presented and tested for compatibility with the company's philosophy. This process was then continued over a four-month period with testing cycles of three to four weeks, allowing the team to root out undesired functionality in the early project stages.

At the end of the implementation phase came the intensive trial period and the pilot phase. After F-IT had successfully tested



the software, H&M carried out their own tests. This was done in the H&M network and environment and also served as a preparation of the subsequent pilot operation in five very different branch offices. After an intensive implementation and trial period lasting only six weeks, the pilot operation quickly proved successful, which meant that the third phase of the project, the roll-out phase, could finally begin. This presented the team with new challenges, given the enormous task of training the staff of over 1,200 branches in 22 countries. The different hardware used throughout the branches also had to be checked for technical deficiencies, and more than 1,700 system texts had to be translated into 16 additional language versions. Yet as soon as these obstacles were overcome, the roll-out process was carried out very rapidly - in less than two months - for educating the Country/Area controllers. For educating all 1,200 shops, by looking at the total roll out period, educating the controllers and the shops, took approx. six months.

Rapid Successes...

The project turned out to be a huge success. Employees embraced the system and began using it from the very first day. The number of telephone calls and queries made was very low from the beginning as the system was designed to be completely compatible with H&M's previous working methods. One very important success was—and still is—the high transparency of all shops across the globe at all times.

Many additional information such as the previous year's turnover or special events within the planning phase (large occasions, holidays, local festivities etc.) are made available to planners. The number of users accessing the server at the same time has even exceeded the original expectation by 150 percent. A lot of very good suggestions made by staff were also implemented in the weeks that followed. Step by step, the warehouses and distribution centers were next incorporated into the system as well as the area and country management.

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- Personnel Scheduling,
- Access Control,
- Time Recording,
- Shop Floor Data Collection,
- etc.

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