

A LITTLE BIT MORE FREE TIME

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A trusted partner to one of Europe's oldest logistics company, Infosys is helping the 400-year-old organization reinvent itself to become a leaner, more efficient, and happier place to work.

It's 4:30 pm on a Friday afternoon as Väinö Hakkinen walks into the neighborhood café to catch up with Sofia Korhonen, a friend and an ex-colleague. Väinö is a shift supervisor at Finland's best-known logistics company. Until six months ago, Sofia and he worked together at their Punavuori depot in Helsinki. Sofia has since moved onto another job, preferring to "trade in the everyday chaos at a logistics service depot for the relative calm of an accountant's office".

Their orders for Olvi and Sapas placed, they begin catching up, recalling the old times at work, and how they've changed.

"I just couldn't understand Excel," laughs Sofia, referring to the software that supervisors like her and Väinö relied on to prepare shift schedules for their respective depots. "It was so stressful. I'm happy I left," she shudders.

"It's much better now," smiles Väinö, "Can you imagine us catching up, at 4:30 pm on a working day, six months ago?"

Growing pains

Väinö's company has a rich and storied past. From the time it was established in 1638, it has been at the forefront of original thinking. It was one of the first institutions to hire women employees in the 1860s, and in 2011, it became the first service in the world to make all its deliveries completely carbon-neutral. Today the company has 20,000 employees that are spread over 1,400 service points across Finland

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The shift supervisor's nightmare

Scheduling and planning shifts for workers is a key activity that ensures that shipments are delivered on time, and with a minimum of fuss. Efficient shift planning also helps in making optimal use of available resources, and reducing avoidable costs (overtime, for example). The company's shift management and scheduling falls on the shoulders of 200 shift supervisors like Väinö. But until recently, this was an activity that many shift supervisors described as "everyday chaos".

There were two primary reasons for it – First, the company didn't have a robust, enterprise-level workforce management system. So, shift supervisors relied on an Excel sheet to map out shift schedules over the quarter. These rosters were pinned onto a notice board where employees could read their schedules over the next three months. The 'system' itself wasn't

integrated with the other IT systems that the company used (time management, attendance, and payroll accounting to name a few) so there was no feedback loop to make sure that the shift data, attendance data and payroll data tallied.

Second, the nature of the workforce made shift planning and scheduling inherently complex. Finland has a number of employee unions, and each employee can enrol in a union of their choice. Different employee unions though have different contracts for its members – including policies on work hours, vacation days, medical benefits and more. A shift schedule had to consider the employees' skills, their contract details (which differed by union), leave and holiday details, and so on. All this made shift scheduling a complex, effort-intensive task that was prone to errors.

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Infosys helps Väinö's company navigate its next

Infosys had already been working with Väinö's employer since 2018, and had showcased their capabilities to them. In 2019, Infosys was chosen as a partner to maintain the company's applications and IT infrastructure for a period of five years. Revamping the shift scheduling and management task was one of its first remit.

Infosys put together a cross-functional team in Helsinki and Jaipur. Deploying an agile methodology, they built a scalable architecture for the system that was based on cloud and microservices. They used RPA to eliminate most of the manual tasks and completely automate most of the shift planning. An AI engine constantly optimized the plans based on historical data and employee skills. Finally, since the system was cloud-based, employees could check their shift schedules on their mobile phones.

Tangible benefits

The new workflow management system helped the company transform its business in more ways than one. Since it used AI and RPA to create the most optimal shift plans, much of the manual intervention was eliminated (and with it, the errors). The system was fully integrated with other systems like payroll accounting, attendance

and time management systems, so reconciliation errors became a thing of the past. And, it had a mobile channel, so workers could now view their shift plans on their mobile phones. A friendlier experience to the workers translated into a better experience for the end consumer.

More importantly, the system helped a shift supervisor manage shifts across multiple depots. This alone resulted in a significant optimization of costs. And, because the entire shift planning process was automated, it also resulted in an improvement in the average shift supervisor's efficiency.

Back at the Café Bar 9 (just '9', for the regulars), Väinö and Sofia finish last of their beers as the sun begins to set. Sofia listens in rapt attention as Väinö describes a new reward system that his employer is piloting.

"It's actually more like a game," he says, "You know, competing with friends, superstar badges, financial rewards and the like, as you move up the levels. Pretty cool."

His subordinates tell him they're feeling more motivated and energized, and at least three of them who were planning on quitting, have stayed back.

"But that's another story," he smiles, "for next Friday, perhaps? Same time?"

The system automated shift planning, taking much of the manual interventions out. It helped a shift supervisor manage shifts across multiple locations, which resulted in a significant optimization in costs, and efficiency.



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