

Ramboll Group

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The Ramboll Group is the leading Nordic provider of knowledge services, with Finland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden as its home markets. The company offers a range of expert services in the fields of construction, environmental technology, IT, and business management.

Between 2003 and 2005, the Group experienced rapid growth and Ramboll now employs over 5,000 dedicated specialists in 97 offices. The speed and scale of this growth highlighted the need for a more effective management system, and in particular a better understanding of business performance at group management level.

Better resource alignment

When Sari Kaikkonen became Chief Financial Officer for the Group in 2005, one of her first tasks was to select and implement a new management system. Following an extensive selection process, the company chose the Cognos Performance Management solution.

“Before, business information was received through different channels and they were manually combined, mostly using Excel. Preparing reports was time-consuming and laborious,” she says. “Using the Cognos solution, we can focus on analysing figures and managing performance instead of producing reports and figures.”

The Ramboll solution includes Cognos 8 Business Intelligence, Cognos Controller, and Cognos Planning. The system enables the standardisation of the consolidation, planning, and reporting processes, and better business monitoring and analysis. It compiles information from the Group’s many source systems into a data storage that acts as the basis for reporting.

The first stage of the implementation focused on data storage and business planning, and has progressed mostly according to schedule. The biggest challenge to

Industry:

- Engineering, consultancy, product development and operations services of buildings, infrastructure, industrial processes, energy, water and environment, telecommunication, management, and IT

Geography:

- Finland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden

Information Needs:

- Replacing time-consuming manual spreadsheet-based reporting
- Shift in focus to analysing figures and managing performance rather than producing reports
- Improved management information

Platforms:

- Microsoft SQL servers
- IBM hardware
- VM ware

Users:

- Board
- Senior Management, Management
- Accountants and controllers
- Production
- Human resources
- Communication

Solution:

- Cognos 8 Business Intelligence
- Cognos Controller
- Cognos Planning

Benefits:

- Improved data quality
- Single, realistic view of the business
- Better comparability of information
- Excellent user feedback on ease of use
- Better use of finance function resources
- More strategic role for finance function

date has been the consolidation process, as Denmark's consolidation practices differ from those of other countries. "By integrating all information into a single data storage, we can ensure data quality and get a single, realistic view of the business," Sari says. "The comparability of information is also improved." Initial reactions from users have been very positive: "The system is easy to use, whether you're creating the reports or using them," she adds approvingly.

From annual budget to rolling forecasts

Sari Kaikkonen represents a new type of financial officer—one that significantly influences the strategic development of the business by discarding annual budgets and moving to rolling forecasts and management benchmarks.

"The budgeting process represents the detailed reality at a certain point in time, but the budget itself does not correspond to reality. It looks back and tries to depict the future," she explains. "Reality, however, changes every day, so it is very likely that the assumptions the budget is based on become old before the final budget is approved. The budget is a static tool, which tells us very little about the direction or speed of change. It is not very effective for management. It also turns financial professionals into number crunchers."

Finance function becomes more strategic

"Our Cognos solution is based on benchmark management—a combination of the factors most affecting business development," says Sari. "By focusing rolling forecasts on benchmarks and emphasising their analysis the finance department can take a more active management role."

Sari envisions a future where the finance department is integrated into strategic development and business management. Instead of being a control function, it becomes a source of information for the decision-makers in the organisation.

"The financial officers of both large and small companies will want to have a more active role in strategic work," says Sari. "Our task is to ensure added business value, mainly by translating activity visions into benchmarks and interpreting their progress. This all requires effective utilisation of business intelligence. A good performance management solution is a prerequisite for holistic business management."