



IMPROVED MONITORING OF ABSENTEEISM IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Employees at various Belgian Federal Public Services have developed a negative reputation regarding absenteeism. But is it really true? To answer this question, the ICT department of the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment (FPS Health) was instructed to develop an application to better follow-up absenteeism on a global scale. Part of this application was to provide better and advanced reporting to achieve more efficient monitoring of absenteeism. Therefore they developed a dynamic reporting environment, with SAS. Result? HR Management at every Federal Public Service can now consult and tailor detailed secure absenteeism reports online.

Industry

Government

Business Issue

Evaluation of absenteeism across both public and private sectors using similar criteria.

Solution

SAS® Enterprise Intelligence Platform

Benefits

1. Improved and harmonized procedures (absenteeism data collection, control checks, follow-up)
2. Absenteeism policies can be improved faster thanks to dynamic and reliable online information.

BELGIAN FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICES IDENTIFY TRENDS USING SAS REPORTS

Building a common ground of analysis

Each year, official figures show that absenteeism rates in the public sector are higher than in the private sector. But do these statistics truly represent reality? Until recently, these rates were not calculated on the same basis. For instance, pregnancy was regarded as sick leave in the public, but not in the private sector.

“The Belgian Federal Government asked us to establish an objective method for registering and following up on absenteeism,” explains Luc Billion, ICT Responsible for Application Development at the FPS Health. “One specifically wanted a system that would enable the accurate evaluation of absenteeism across both public and private sectors using similar criteria. And if results would show that there really is a problem, management should be able to use the information to improve their policies.”

From idea to delivery in only six months

The ICT department at the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment had to work under a very tight deadline. “We were only given six months to work out a

solution,” states Billion. “And if that wasn’t challenging enough, we had virtually nothing to build on. Previously, absenteeism statistics were generated on an ad hoc basis. Reports were only made at the specific request of Parliament. This project was certainly no stroll through the park.”

Automated data collection

One of the first problems was how to gather all this data. “When people fell sick, there were no pre-defined procedures to keep track of their absence. It all depended upon their boss or colleague being notified, and their subsequent action,” clarifies Anne Furdelle of the Internet and Intranet Competence Center at the FPS Health. “To address this problem, we worked out a new system and procedures to streamline and automate the collection of all data related to absenteeism. Now, all Federal Public Services must register the leaves of their members through the web application before 9.00 a.m. Leaves are then immediately registered in a central database, which already holds personnel files.”

Securing follow-up action

“The system ensures that 30 percent of the one-day sickness and 20 percent

Building the absenteeism-reporting tool has already led to improved and harmonized procedures

“Thanks to SAS we can generate reports on absenteeism from all governmental and semi-governmental institutions.”

Luc Billion

ICT Responsible for Application
Development at the FPS Health

of multiple-day sickness is checked. The Federal Public Services can ask physicians to do controls. If they don't, the system will automatically choose some. The absence registration system will assign controls to the appropriate inspection doctors. “The database holds approximately 150 doctors certified to run control checks for the government. Those living closest to the person calling in sick are notified via the application accessible through Internet. If they are able to run a control check, they can immediately accept,” adds Furdelle. “The physicians encode the results of their control visits into the central database.

Dynamic reporting made easy

All of the data is collected in a central database. HR staff members, team leaders, and service managers at Belgian Federal Public Services can consult the information online and receive all of the statistics they need. “Users can tailor reports to answer very specific questions,” observes Billion. “Are men sick more than women? Do certain institutions suffer from more absenteeism than others? Did the flu have a serious impact? In which months do we have the highest rate of absence? Answering these questions is

a matter of selecting the right set of parameters. The results roll out automatically.”

Integration of data and technologies

Users can generate SAS reports any time, any place. The application is accessible online, via the Web site of the FPS Health. “To make it possible to publish the dynamic SAS reports on our Web site, we had to integrate the SAS Platform into our Oracle Portal environment. Through close collaboration with the SAS consultants, we succeeded”, says Furdelle.

Each institution can autonomously decide who is to be allowed to generate reports on absenteeism. Furdelle: “Secure access to the reporting tool is ensured via an eID token. Not everyone has clearance to access the tool. Each institution is empowered to assign the right set of roles to the right persons, according to the institution's needs.”

When expansion is inevitable

Since May 2007, 66 departments and agencies from various Belgian Federal Public Services have access to the online application and reporting tool. This represents about 80,000 employees. “In time, however, we

envision to incorporate all agents,” points out Billion. “This tool is to span all federal institutions, as well as other governmental ones, such as cities and provinces.”

Furdelle concludes that by the end of the year, controls will depend on the Bradford statistic. This represents the average rate of absenteeism per group of people. “Once we have this, we can easily benchmark departments or institutions against each other. This will enable management to improve their policies further. Before we can do this, however, we need at least one year of data. And that will be the case as of November 2007.”



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