

Introducing **NZEC** Consultancy
part of **NZeCommerce** Group

In 1996 British Railways, as part of a government break-up asks British Telecom to run its National Rail Enquiry Service (NRES). The resulting outsourced call centre solution was the biggest in BTs history as they took over 8 large call centres, 1200 payroll & agency staff along with the customer services function for the rail network.



British
TELECOM



Our director Trevor Sharman worked as a contract Project Manager running the Finance Workstream managing the integration of the legacy finance departments into BT core functions/ systems over the next 18 months.

The project was a cost saving exercise for the Railways who were undergoing massive restructuring. Transferring the people and facilities to BT where they as telecoms specialists restructured the mix of call centres turning some of them into contact centres integrated with BT and closed others. An agreed annual fee was paid to BT assuming it met the required service levels.

There were numerous significant HR issues from transferring over a good number of the railways

staff to BT terms and conditions and releasing others.

There were also significant technical challenges and tight financial constraints with BT expecting to realise the financial benefits in accordance with an ambitious schedule.

Being one of the main project team getting exposed to such a large a structured project with the related tight financial and timeline constraints

was quite an experience for a young accountant from New Zealand.

The key performance indicator for the project was the average time it took to answer a NRES call throughout the transition. Under the well-staffed railways regime these stats were pretty good. Initially under BT these were quite poor and this put considerable pressure on the team but over time the performance crept back up with less staff but improved technology.

Adding to the challenges was the fact that the railways people were all just getting used to no longer being part of what had been a quality national treasure, an integrated rail network, called British Railways. Obviously the government had their economic reasons for breaking up and selling off these state owned enterprises and no doubt the figures added up on paper but it did have a considerable impact through uncertainty and loss of jobs for people in the acquired businesses.

The uncertainty was not helped by the fact that the train operators were split into regions and aligned under the banner of ATOC (Association of Train Operating Companies) and were all finding their feet as stand-alone businesses.

A lot of the work was in the North of England where we had the task of amalgamating various small finance functions around the country and transferring work to the central BT functions. Challenging because the BT people didn't really want the new workload and the BR people didn't really want to let it go!

I met a lot of very decent people and hope that by being as considerate and professional as possible we dealt with difficult decisions made well above our heads, as best we could.

This was the first of many structured business integration projects I have been involved with over the years but probably the most brutal.



Trevor Sharman, Director & Principal Consultant
at NZeC Consultancy
... we were there ... making things happen!

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