

THE POWER OF DATA

The transition that NSI's portfolio has gone through since the new strategy was launched is thanks not least to the ability to unlock relevant data in a more efficient way. This data is then the basis for better reporting and investment decisions and therefore also the source of management information that ensures that the portfolio is managed in the best possible way. NSI continues to invest in information technology in order to improve the performance of its portfolio and organisation. The next step is to enrich data with external sources and to inform tenants in an active, data-driven way.



Culture as a game changer
Systems analyst Boyke Ramdat and Controller Marcel Kruit joined NSI in 2016, just before the new strategy was launched. That was a good time to join. To be able to take a good hard look at the portfolio there had to be more insight into it. This need acted as a catalyst to restructure the processes and systems. “All financial and operational data had to be combined to be able to make a correct analysis. In the past these were often separate streams of information in multiple systems owned by different teams. A lot of the data was entered manually, making the process both prone to error and time-consuming,” Boyke explained.

A new data warehouse emerged and a new business intelligence system was implemented, the data for which is centrally provided by the ERP system. This is crucial as an enabler but still not the biggest game changer, Marcel said, adding: “That was the cultural change that resulted in much more cooperation. In the past Finance was relatively far removed from the operations. Now we are working in a much more multi-disciplined way.” “And everything was reviewed – from process to system – to determine if we were doing the right things in the best way. This gave everyone both room and responsibility, and that greatly increased the will to change,” Boyke explained.

Real time insight for everyone

A lot of attention was focused on what the business really needed. “It was important for the systems to be supported,” Boyke said. Workflows were automated as much as possible, which cut back on the administrative burden and improved efficiency, an important step forward in using the customer relationship management (CRM) system more effectively. “Asset managers now have a real-time overview of the available square metres. And a lease can be generated on the spot, automatically, quickly and error-free. That process used to have to go through various chains of people and systems.”

Data is now not only more stable and reliable but also accessible and available to everyone at any given time. “The biggest benefit has been that we have automated the conversion from data to information. An asset manager can scroll through the portfolio, make analyses and print out reports at any given time,” Boyke explained. As a result Boyke and Marcel can now be more like business partners. “Our added value is now much more in the field of analysis. When it comes to specific information needs in exceptional situations, but also for strategic planning and improving the predictability of our real estate portfolio. It is, however, the case that the more information becomes available, the more

questions that arise – questions that are often more detailed. So we are constantly developing and that just makes our work even more fun and challenging!” Marcel said.

“It is not only the Asset Management team that is benefiting from this digital unlocking of information,” Marcel added. “Our external and internal financial reports are fully automated. In the past the accounts were manually processed in Excel. These days they are fully automated. That means that the figures can be processed much quicker and that the chance of error is much lower.” When NSI closes its books at the end of the quarter the figures are available the next morning. All the tables that are published in internal and external reports and presentations are automatically generated. “So now we can report two weeks sooner than we did in the past,” he continued. That’s a difference of eight weeks a year in a process that involves many people. “Now all these people can focus on other things than reporting for those eight weeks a year. That means not being distracted by the past but working on the future,” Marcel said.

Always developing

Optimising our financial and operational reporting is an ongoing development. With NSI now entering a new phase with development as a new activity, a new need for information has been created. “Because we operate close to the business, we and the development team are entering the stage of determining what information is needed and desired, Boyke said.”

Another development is the need for more information about sustainability performance. In 2019 NSI took its first step to inform tenants about sustainability. With the help of information screens and login portals tenants can gain an insight into their energy usage. More information and increased awareness will enable them to make more conscious choices and engage them more in NSI’s sustainability strategy. This development goes hand in hand with the up-and-coming trend that tenants are able to manage their own energy usage, for instance by arranging the temperature and lighting.

NSI is still at the start of this development. The further deployment of sensor technology and other advancements provides a wealth of opportunities that can benefit both tenants and NSI. This development provides information about how a space functions and can be used. “This kind of information can also help benchmark why one building in the portfolio is more successful than another,” Marcel noted. “To take the next step we have to work together closely with our technical and asset management colleagues. That will be a fun next step in our multi-disciplined way of working,” Boyke concluded.

INTERVIEW WITH

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