

Eurostar

An international rail operator succeeds with a complex merger and enterprise transformation



The successful launch of the DELTA project saw Eurostar reach a significant milestone in its digital transformation journey. Thanks to the support of VRP's technical expertise, Eurostar is able to provide a unified customer experience for our contact centre customers.

Laurent Bellan, Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

The Challenge

Can you unify the information systems of two European rail giants in only a year and a half - aligned with a major rebrand launch on a fixed date and with zero service disruption to 15 million passengers? That was Eurostar's challenge. In March 2022, they received approval for their merger with Thalys, so both companies' extensive and complex technology ecosystems, including their Salesforce orgs, needed to be combined. This vast programme of work had to be completed for an immovable go-live on 1st October, 2023, due to shareholder and commercial commitments - and because media to launch the new Eurostar branding had already been bought and scheduled for this big day. No room for error and no time to waste.

The Wish

The clock was ticking and Eurostar needed a Salesforce Partner with the expertise and resources to merge their Salesforce org with Thalys's, migrate data, match up all necessary integrations and bring together their many existing platforms and systems including financial systems, websites, onboard train devices and inventory systems. It would also involve enabling effective case management and a comprehensive view of the customer for both B2C and B2B sales, including distributors, resellers and direct customers. Their partner would need to unify both enterprises' business processes and overcome associated operational challenges, while collaborating across multiple work streams and with Eurostar's internal delivery teams and partners. A tall order in such an incredibly tight timeframe.

The Solution

So Eurostar could meet its big deadline, VRP Consulting took on a wide-ranging consulting role, leading programme management in a portfolio of nine programmes, in which Salesforce and VRP were central to success. Working in sync with stakeholders and external teams, VRP consolidated both orgs, including Sales Cloud, Service Cloud and Marketing Cloud instances, unifying Indirect Sales and Customer Service business units into a single existing Salesforce org. They supported integrations via MuleSoft and Boomi, and also set up filtered change data capture to orchestrate notifications to external systems. VRP migrated Thalys' communications, preferences and customer journeys (campaigns) into Marketing Cloud from Campaign Monitor. They also proposed and implemented a DevOps strategy to streamline deployments.

15 million

passengers with one single platform and customer experience

15 months

to complete enterprise transformation in time for fixed deadline

Zero disruption

to processes or customer complaints due to system merger

The Stages

To achieve Eurostar's crucial roadmap timelines, VRP meticulously planned out the delivery of three parallel projects for Service Cloud, Sales Cloud and Marketing Cloud. First, workshops were conducted to understand Eurostar's processes, systems, integrations and data - both "as-is" and "to-be". Next, VRP carefully defined individual "user stories", overarching "epics", required solution architecture and technical designs needed to meet the business requirements.

Early in this discovery and design period, VRP instituted regular "steerco" (steering committee) meetings with Eurostar's CIO, senior stakeholders, and VRP leads in Delivery and Customer Success teams, plus a senior executive. This ensured vital executive attention and priority decision-making, and that all involved understood what the programme meant to Eurostar and their market reputation.

The project build and QA testing phase ran using Agile Scrum as a delivery methodology. Regular deployments of features were delivered into a UAT environment for "early user acceptance testing" and verification the solution was meeting business expectations. Due to the size and complexity of delivery, the UAT phase ran for three months, in which the business tested end-to-end functionality and process. Deployment, the make-or-break final phase, was complex in planning and execution, and included all teams and partners involved in the program, in performing a sequence of "dry runs" simulating all go-live activities in increasing scope and breadth. The programme was successfully delivered on time, for 1st October 2023, as per Eurostar commitments - a huge success.

The Result

Eurostar Group achieved its main goals and met its big deadline, thanks to VRP's work successfully implementing the Eurostar and Thalys merger program. The vital go-live took place on time, with business processes continuing uninterrupted throughout the programme and zero customer complaints related to the system merger. A single website, process, and loyalty programme were introduced and became the first visible effects of the merger for customers. The rebranded Eurostar now had a single platform, a new eurostar.com website and customer experience, with customer engagement and marketing now extended to support 4 languages. They can rest assured they're able to meet their 15 million passengers' needs, and have a solid base for growth towards their target of 30 million passengers by 2030.

Company Profile

Eurostar, the new company combining Eurostar and Thalys, aims to carry 30 million passengers a year by 2030 and become the benchmark for sustainable travel in Europe. With a fleet of 51 trains, Eurostar offers the largest international high-speed network in Western Europe, serving 28 destinations in Germany, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

PLATFORM	PROJECT	LOCATION	INDUSTRY
Service Cloud, Sales Cloud, Marketing Cloud, Loyalty Cloud, Boomi, MuleSoft	Consulting design and delivery engagement to merge Thalys and Eurostar orgs, data and processes following corporate merger	UK, France, Benelux, Germany	Travel & Hospitality

Need an expert partner to merge Salesforce orgs, data and processes post-M&A? Contact us today to discuss your individual needs.