

# END-TO-END PROCESS DESIGN STREAMLINES SUCCESSFUL GLOBAL TRAVEL SERVICES MERGER

## Case Study

### THE CLIENT CHALLENGE

When a leading seller of wholesale hotel rooms and services to the travel industry completed the purchase of their top competitor, its leaders were committed to making the newly combined billion dollar organisation as effective as possible, incorporating the best practices of both companies. It quickly became clear, however, that both organisations had outdated, cumbersome information systems.

The systems functioned well enough – as long as an experienced, knowledgeable person was at the keyboard. However training anyone new was a laborious, time-consuming process. Moreover, the archaic, text-only operating system made it difficult to add new features and product offerings. Customised additions needed to support sales and service offices in more than 30 countries speaking 20+ different languages could take months. In short, internal efficiency was down, and timely external product launches had become nearly impossible. It was time to update the organisation's processes as well as the information architecture that would support them. They looked to North Highland to help them do it.

**That's where North Highland came in.**

### THE SOLUTION

The politics of a merger could have made this process difficult, but at North Highland, we specifically geared our approach to encourage essential input from both teams. This not only gave us the most comprehensive input, it also generated buy-in from the teams that would need to champion the new system's implementation.

**WE BEGAN BY  
CONDUCTING MORE  
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AND INTERVIEWS  
WITH SUBJECT  
MATTER EXPERTS AND  
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TO UNDERSTAND  
EXISTING PROCESSES.**

With that in mind, we began by conducting more than 30 workshops and interviews with subject matter experts and leadership teams around the world to understand existing processes, identify opportunities for improvement, and define desired outcomes. We helped the client establish new reports and more streamlined processes that formed the basis for the new information system while preparing the company for a more efficient workflow than they had ever had.

North Highland quickly realised that the sales team was working in relative isolation from the rest of the business – which often generated favorable rates from suppliers but did so at the expense of profitable margins, internal relationships, and supply contracts. We helped the newly combined organisation define one consistent set of contractual arrangements with suppliers while determining how the new information system could use supplier market knowledge (i.e., when and where the Olympics, World Cup Soccer or other major events would be held) to ensure the best possible rates for each location throughout the year. And we worked with the sales team to define a new strategy to achieve five-year goals, as well as determine their needs for the new system. All the while, we were careful to take cultural considerations into account so regions that still required particular paper-based documentation would be accommodated.

In the end, we provided the client with more than 70 process maps, detailing, for the first time, all processes, including regional variations. We created a target Operating Model, detailing findings, recommendations for improvements (including supporting metrics) and new or revised processes that would improve productivity and efficiency. And we enabled the client to rapidly document requirements for the new system in support of a complete a gap analysis and vendor selection process.

## THE VALUE

The new information system is expected to roll out within the next twelve months. Its innovative features will include an intuitive new interface that can anticipate and provide useful information before it's even requested. For instance, if an agent adds Paris to a tour, key sights to see, area events and relevant hotels will appear automatically. The fully functional Web interface will serve both clients and suppliers, enabling a new level of self-service that had previously never existed.

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## ABOUT NORTH HIGHLAND

North Highland is a global management consulting firm that delivers unique value, relevant big ideas and strategic business capabilities to clients around the world. The firm solves complex business problems for clients in multiple industries through an integrated approach and offers specialty services via its Data and Analytics, Managed Services, and Sparks Grove divisions. North Highland is an employee-owned firm that has been named as a “Best Firm to Work For” every year since 2007 by Consulting Magazine. The firm is a member of Cordence Worldwide ([www.cordenceworldwide.com](http://www.cordenceworldwide.com)), a global management consulting alliance. For more information, visit [northhighland.com](http://northhighland.com) and connect with us on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook.

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FIRM THAT HAS BEEN  
NAMED AS A BEST FIRM  
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YEAR SINCE 2007**

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