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CAPANA  
PROVIDED  
QLIKVIEW  
TO MAGASIN

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“HOW ELSE COULD WE  
MANAGE MILLIONS OF  
TRANSACTIONS DISTRIBUTED  
ACROSS 7 LOCATIONS?”

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**Magasin, which has held an iconic status as one of Denmark's largest and leading department store chains for over half a century, now consistently works with Business Intelligence. Here is their story about the benefits it has provided and why Magasin chose QlikView and Capana as their IT supplier and implementation partner, respectively.**

# Magasin



*Peter Fabricius,  
CFO, Magasin du Nord,  
interviewed by Bjarke Stemann*

## What was the background for starting to look for a Business Intelligence solution?

At the top of our financial systems, it is important to have a system that can deliver data throughout our entire company. The big decision was actually more about "Which system should it be?" And that decision is still very difficult to make today because it seems like they can all do the same thing. So, one can easily end up with a solution that doesn't satisfy one's needs.

## What were the business aspects that you couldn't achieve?

One can say that financial systems cannot provide follow-up on, for example, a budget or report on how sales went yesterday and distribute it to certain people. In fact, the whole distribution of data, gathering data and providing qualified feedback is not possible with a financial system today. That's where a Business Intelligence system is needed.

## If the systems look so similar

### - why did you end up choosing Capana and QlikView?

Actually, we initially made the wrong choice. So, we went through the process of selecting a vendor who ultimately couldn't deliver what we needed. It was about the fact that the amount of data quickly becomes very large. On the surface, all companies may look good, but when you dig deeper, you find out what really happens. And the further you go, the more knowledge you gain, and the more profitability you can achieve with your solution.

Our ambition level was very modest, to say the least: We wanted to have the lowest level of data. We wanted to go down to every sales transaction that takes place in our business. Every receipt that is processed, every employee, every purchaser, every person who has done something or bought something, it is registered in this system. We wanted a shared database with everything.

## And does that generate a lot of data?

It generates a lot of data, and therefore, the solution we started with had to give up at some point. It sets some very high demands when running retail. Typically, there are a lot of transactions in our stores, and most solutions quickly become incredibly complicated to make work. The resource investment simply becomes too large compared to the return.

## What convinced you that Capana and QlikView could possibly solve your challenges?

At that time, we had started to become immune to sales messages, so we were firm from the beginning: "If you can prove that you can solve the task, then we can start discussing the economics of it. But let's start with a no-obligation seminar where you demonstrate that you can handle the task."

And I was quite surprised because I had tried to implement a solution for nine months that I couldn't really get to work.

And now we quickly see that we can solve all those needs, plus the related ones. It was a revelation to see that it can be done very low-key with just one person involved in the project.

So, a new world opened up. Suddenly, we can track everything - and the system can be operated with very little training. We have a consulting team involved, well, calling it a team is a stretch because there's only one or two individuals. That means one person working around the clock, providing daily progress reports on how far we've come. It creates fantastic momentum when it doesn't involve a large team and a complicated process.

## Which business areas are included in your solution?

We started with one area. We didn't need to design a fully scaled solution and implement it after a year. We could already say after fourteen days: Now we can do this. And if we needed to go back in the process and implement more or make some changes, it wouldn't undermine everything else we had done. Many systems struggle with that.

That's one of the important qualifying requirements in these systems. Today, we have moved from initially understanding what's happening with sales and employees to encompassing all our purchases, all purchased items, all inventory, all payroll systems, all settlement systems, and all customer counters. Everything we have data on is now implemented into our Business Intelligence solution. We have done it gradually over a period of time.

## How does the solution integrate with your other systems?

It is fully integrated today. You can often measure something concrete by asking: How many employee resources are dedicated to this process? And I can confidently reveal that in Magasin, there is one person working on this project for our entire business. And it's not someone with an extensive degree in computer science, but a skilled and dedicated employee who has taken on the task of developing it. And that is also one of the strengths of the system - with the right prerequisites, you can easily become self-sufficient.

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**PETER FABRICIUS**

*CFO, Magasin du Nord.*

**How do you work with the solution - both strategically and tactically?**

I recently had a conversation with our CEO where he told me that it is one of the biggest successes we have had in our company and the turnaround process Magasin has gone through. Now we have a system that can provide data across all our functions. There is hardly a function in Magasin that is not somehow dependent on our solution in this area. It ranges from purchasing goods to selling them, monitoring financial results, sending daily balance sheets and inventory reports to our business areas and individual employees, managing bonus and incentive programs, and distributing both practical, tactical, and to some extent strategic materials. Having everything in our systems, it always becomes a central focal point where we can quickly look up information. Moreover, it doesn't require an IT person to generate a report. Even I can easily access relatively complex information with just a few keystrokes.

**Can you give an example of something you would look for?**

If I want to find out why a specific area has a lower gross margin than budgeted, I can go in and click a couple of times on the screen to find out everything about the product and sales effort. I can access all the information related to that particular area in that particular store with just a few keystrokes. This is typically what we would look into and follow up on. Hvis jeg vil finde ud af, hvorfor et område har en lavere bruttoavance, end vi havde

**When you investigate the gross margin, what can you discover?**

For example, we might find out that certain items are out of stock or that there was a lack of staffing in a specific area, leading to selling one type of product instead of another. In fact, I can delve into the details and understand everything if I search for it. It's relatively quick to find out. Sometimes things may look fine on the surface, but when you dig deeper, you realize that, for example, "Hey, black socks in size 41, which is the only thing customers want, is the only thing we don't have..." and then you can quickly address the problem. It's about being able to easily track and access data that brings value in these systems.

**How many people use your QlikView solution?**

Almost everyone uses it, although many of them are indirect users. In fact, the system sends out between 400-700 reports per day to both our partners and internal employees. So there are quite a few - both suppliers and employees - who receive something from this system. Typically, it's sales information and scoring, indicating where a specific supplier stands compared to others on a given floor. We have anonymized it, of course, so you can't see who's good or bad, but you can always track yourself. We have also provided profitability analyses to all our sales managers and shop managers. In essence, we have established a comprehensive schedule of who should receive what and when. We have plotted everyone into it, creating a structured process for the information people receive when they are here.

**So standard reporting and also ad hoc reporting?**

Yes, there are around 110 users on the system. It's rare for anyone to have an office job at Magasin without having direct access to the system and the ability to operate it themselves. They can't make mistakes, and it's very easy to use. That's one of the prerequisites because many of our employees are not economists or people who have taken computer science courses in their free time. It gives us tremendous flexibility that people can retrieve the information themselves.

**How has your collaboration with Capana been in terms of implementing the system?**

I have contemplated that question because I believe that you need to find a collaboration partner that fits the company you're in and the temperament you have. Long projects with few progress reports are not exactly to my liking because I feel that the risk becomes significant in the end. You end up paying a lot of money, and you're not really sure what you're getting. So the requirements for Capana were that there should be ongoing reporting, and they should be on-site doing it because I want to be able to follow the time and effort spent. And I want an ongoing dialogue about it. I must say that Capana has understood this in this case. They have delivered what we wanted from the start, so there haven't been any problems. It has also been good that we don't have to constantly call Capana. In fact, they only call about other things. So we're not actively developing the project with them anymore. They deliver to the point where they say, "Now you're at a stage where you're actually self-sufficient." And that's where we are now.

**I'm not sure how long you've been working on it, but what business benefits have you gained?**

Today, we can't imagine life without it. It's a system that needs to work all the time because we are heavily dependent on it. That's the downside, so to speak, but we can't live without these systems today. They are the central focal point for everything that happens; they are the business systems we have built up here. So it's a crucial part of our business operations.

**What are your plans for developing the use of Business Intelligence?**

We are constantly developing, taking it step by step. So every time we see a new area where we could benefit from support of one kind or another, it typically ends up being QlikView as the solution. And the fantastic thing is that it's relatively quick to make these things happen.

**Now that you're talking about the system, what do you think is the biggest advantage?**

The biggest advantage is that it's such a powerful engine; you can put everything into it. It gets a little technical, but ultimately, it's about the outcome. When you have a business with hundreds of thousands of item numbers like we do, and they change over seasons, when we implemented the system, we talked about maybe replacing one and a half million item numbers in these cycles every year, and we have many employees who constantly change functional areas.

So here you're actually dealing with a data foundation that is constantly evolving, and that's where you need a good structure that can manage these volumes of data. And together with our partner, we understand how to create a solution that can handle that task. Partly because there is an enormous weight of data, I mean really, really massive amounts of data. And partly because we haven't accepted slow response times. We have stated that it should be such that when you click, you get an immediate response. Otherwise, no one will use it. And in that regard, we must say that Capana has managed to put together a solution that can continuously adapt to our business needs.

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PETER FABRICIUS

*CFO, Magasin du Nord.*

**What is your advice to others considering implementing Business Intelligence?**

I have often encountered a misleading question from vendors: "Tell us what you want, so we can solve it." Initially, it sounds promising. Oh, how wonderful it is to have a vendor who wants to solve our problems. However, I don't know what my needs will be in five years. I don't know how I will be conducting business at that time. That is something we cannot know today, at least not here. So, fundamentally, that is not the question you should answer. Instead, you should ask yourself: What do I want the solution to be capable of? What implementation process do I want for my system? You should find an IT vendor that constantly adapts to the dynamic environment in which your company operates. You should also figure out if you want a lot or a little. I always recommend aiming for a lot because I believe that 80% of the value lies in the details, not just in the topline, as almost everyone knows that.

If you want to derive value from Business Intelligence, you need to have a significant number of transactions within it. Therefore, you should find an IT vendor who can handle that aspect and also have an implementation partner who understands how to tailor it to meet your company's requirements. I might personally think that my own approach is the best, but everyone must assess that for themselves. I have benefited greatly from success-driven implementation, where users are constantly shown that "now you can do this, now you can do a little more." This way, you get the users on your side. Additionally, it should be easy to operate. If it requires three scientists sitting there extracting data, it will never work. At least not without being very, very expensive, and many of these solutions are that way today.

They are terribly expensive, which they really shouldn't be, all things considered.



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