



CASE STUDY



## Spoornet

VeriSign Enables Competitive Decision-Making  
To Be Based On Real-Time News



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## Spoornet

### SOLUTION SUMMARY

Spoornet, a major transporter of freight in the southern Africa region, maintains its competitive edge by relying on VeriSign Real-Time Publisher Services to provide access to newly posted news on the African commodities market to help predict the rail transportation needs of these goods.

#### Industry

- Transportation

#### Challenges

- Needed a reliable solution to provide access to a much wider array of local news web sites in real-time.
- Wanted to be alerted to relevant commodities-based articles as soon as they are posted.
- Required source information to be received electronically.

#### Solution

VeriSign Real-Time Publisher Services:

- VeriSign® Connected Intelligence Services from Moreover Technologies, a VeriSign company

#### Results

- Unprecedented, reliable, real-time access to relevant English-language articles.
- Data is not overlooked— as new web sources come online the VeriSign service quickly includes them.
- Huge time-savings in the preparation of the daily bulletin.
- Executives now receive comprehensive real-time information for decision-making.
- Electronic preparation of bulletins now possible with alerts highlighting relevant web-based data.

Headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa, Spoornet—a division of Transnet, which offers Freight Logistic Solutions—has a core competency of freight transportation utilizing rail networks. Spoornet is the largest heavy hauler and transporter of general freight in the southern Africa region. The railroad network extends throughout South Africa connecting all major inland agricultural, mining and industrial areas with major ports, and joining with railroads in neighboring countries. In particular the company—with its 34,000 employees—has built up a world-class heavy haul capability in coal and iron ore export rail operations. Spoornet has set a goal to transform the South African freight sector into an effective and efficient logistics management industry.

To maintain its competitive edge in the transportation of large volumes of minerals, the managers of the rail business keep abreast of developments in the commodities market. This industry-centric information is used to help predict the rail transportation needs of goods—such as iron ore, coal, copper, manganese, etc.—in the days and months to come. In addition, as Spoornet is used by neighboring countries to run selected rail transportation services within their jurisdiction, the company's executives also like to keep in touch with economic growth, commodity development and market changes in the regions around South Africa.

Natasha Havenga, Information Specialist for Spoornet, explained, “At the beginning of each business day I send out a printed news brief to the executive management team. The report contains abstracts, which I write, from relevant news articles that might help us with strategic planning. The executives are constantly making decisions such as new routes, additional rolling stock needs, where there might be an imminent decline in a certain service segment, etc. based on the information that I provide.”

#### + Decision-Making Data Is Time Critical

Havenga was faced with a problem: Not enough time in the early morning to spend scanning numerous Internet news service sites before having to send out the daily news brief prior to the arrival of the executive team. “I start at 6am,” remarked Havenga, “and with the speed of our Internet connection, I typically could only get through a limited percentage of the local sites—nowhere near all the URLs I wanted to review—before the brief was due. I needed a reliable solution to alert me to as many as possible of the relevant commodities-based articles from which I could then compile a truly comprehensive news brief.”

Spoornet's Knowledge Centre had previously tried subscribing to a hardcopy news service. “I received a printed copy of appropriate news articles,” recalled Havenga, “but it was too slow—the articles were not up to the minute and we only received the printouts once a week.”

#### + Real-Time Relay Of Relevant News

Mariaan Joubert, Manager of Spoornet's Knowledge Centre, began investigating the availability of a service that could deliver much more up to date information in a digital format. “It took quite a while because there weren't really any options in South Africa at that stage,” reflected Havenga, “but finally VeriSign Real-Time Publisher Services—VeriSign® Connected Intelligence Services from Moreover® Technologies, a VeriSign company—became available, we tried it, and really liked what we saw.”



*“VeriSign Real-Time Publisher Services makes me aware of the most up-to-date information available in real-time, which gives the opportunity to provide our executives with unprecedented access to the latest news on commodities.”*

Natasha Havenga  
Information Specialist  
Spoornet

VeriSign’s installation experts configured specific real-time information searches of English-language articles on commodities posted on African web sites, and set up corresponding alerts to automatically direct Havenga to these pieces as soon as they are detected.

“VeriSign Real-Time Publisher Services makes me aware of the most up to date information available in real-time, which gives the opportunity to provide our executives with unprecedented access to the latest news on commodities,” stated Havenga. “VeriSign has allowed us to customize the alerts—I have them set for very specific topics, like information on the Democratic Republic of Congo and its copper mines.”

Some other publishing services are now available in South Africa, but Havenga remains delighted with VeriSign. She noted, “When I compare them to VeriSign Real-Time Publisher Services they don’t beat the content alert value/cost ratio that we get from VeriSign. Plus, many focus on the delivery of European and American news, but we are much more interested in the African data, which VeriSign Real-Time Publisher Services is able to direct to me in an accurate and very timely manner.”

#### **+ Rolling Stock Is Ready When Needed**

Spoornet’s use of VeriSign Real-Time Publisher Services has proven to be very successful. “Fundamentally it’s been a huge time-saver for me—I no longer have to spend hours trawling through sites that have nothing. I now arrive at work in the morning and use the VeriSign alerts to direct me straight to the appropriate information, which I can then summarize and pull into the day’s news brief,” explained Havenga. “I’m able to be so much more efficient with my time, and the information I send the executives about the latest news is truly comprehensive and completely up to date.”

The Knowledge Centre is seeing true value for money. “This is a very good service, especially when I consider the actual price that we are paying,” extolled Havenga. “The executives are very happy with the information they receive in my news bulletin because of the depth of commodities and African news that the Service allows me to include. They perceive this to be extremely valuable in their planning processes.”

She closed, “We’ve had great support from our VeriSign account team and they keep us abreast of the latest updates to the Service. As new web sources do come online the VeriSign Real-Time Publisher Services quickly includes appropriate alerts to them, which removes any concerns that I’m missing relevant data.”

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