

DATACARD GROUP ILLUMINATES REPORTING WITH BUSINESSOBJECTS™

"BusinessObjects™ is helping us manage the business with quicker access to information."
 Alla Johnson, Director of IT, Datacard Group

Datacard Group
 SECURE ID AND CARD PERSONALIZATION SOLUTIONS

Industry
 Manufacturing

Business Process
 Operations,
 financial

Challenge
 Datacard Group's new and complex ERP system created the need for flexible, intuitive reporting and visibility into underlying data.

Why Business Objects?
 Expertise in BI, a proven planning and budgeting solution, speed of implementation, and the capability to report on complex data structures quickly makes Business Objects an excellent choice.

Business Objects Products and Services
 BusinessObjects™ XI

BusinessObjects Web Intelligence®

BusinessObjects Data Integrator

BusinessObjects Rapid Marts®

- General Ledger
- Accounts Payable
- Accounts Receivable
- Contracts
- Inventory
- Purchasing

CHALLENGE

If you carry a plastic ID or credit card in your wallet, chances are Datacard Group's equipment helped issue it. Serving customers in more than 120 countries, Datacard Group is the leading supplier of systems, software, and integration services for personalizing plastic cards. Datacard solutions are sold to companies both large and small – ranging from health insurance, governments, banks, and other large organizations that issue thousands if not millions of cards, to small firms and point-of-sale agencies that only need to print one or a few cards at a time.

In business for nearly 40 years, Datacard is savvy in managing its technology resources. Its homegrown enterprise resource planning (ERP) system offered solid views and reporting to approximately 1,400 Datacard employees, who knew how to access the data they needed, according to Alla Johnson, director of IT at Datacard. The challenge began when the company switched to Oracle ERP. Johnson explains, "Over the years, people grew accustomed to their reports being a certain way, and the data being readily available. They all knew the reporting tools very well. So it was a big shock to the organization when we found ourselves in a situation where a lot of the people didn't have the reports they needed – and they didn't even know how to go about getting them." Faced with the new ERP system's considerably more complex data architecture, the learning curve was daunting. Datacard knew it had to take action, fast. Johnson comments, "Information was needed and required quickly. We didn't have a year to spend before making any progress." Datacard looked to business intelligence (BI) solutions from Business Objects, an SAP company.

APPROACH

In addition to gaining access to much-needed data, Datacard sought to leverage new hardware and introduce additional subsidiaries to the new ERP system – while transforming the way it handled reporting and providing all users with access to standard reports. Datacard established a formal team of about 10 people representing different business units to manage its BI and reporting initiative. "We were looking for an across-the-board, cross-functional reporting solution for the company," says Johnson. "We didn't want to purchase a strictly financial reporting tool and then have no analytics for the rest of the business." Additionally, Datacard required a proven planning and budgeting solution – and one that could be quickly implemented.

First on the agenda was giving Datacard financial analysts access to essential financial data. Datacard evaluated building a brand new data warehouse from scratch versus deploying BusinessObjects™ Rapid Marts® packages to kick-start its key business reporting. "It would have taken at least two to three years before we had a good enterprise data warehouse that we could actually make use of," Johnson estimates. "With BusinessObjects Rapid Marts, it was more like nine to 12 months."

In all, Datacard chose to deploy eight Rapid Marts, including the BusinessObjects General Ledger Rapid Mart™ and additional BusinessObjects Rapid Marts for accounts payable, accounts receivable, service contracts, inventory, purchasing, fixed assets, and sales. "BusinessObjects Rapid Marts were a big selling point for us," Johnson adds. "We didn't customize the Oracle ERP a lot, and the Rapid Marts pull the majority of the data over, so we have a large set of data to start with. It's a speed of implementation discussion."

“BusinessObjects Rapid Marts contain the mapping tables between Oracle ERP and BusinessObjects, so they allowed us to move a lot of data into the BusinessObjects environment quickly,” says Johnson. Datacard adopted a sequential deployment approach, implementing each Rapid Mart in order of importance, beginning with the general ledger. “We aren’t going out to the community and asking them what they want. Instead, we’re showing them what’s available in the Rapid Mart, and that gives them a quick start into some of the data,” says Johnson. Datacard then performs a functionality gap analysis to determine the additional features and functions each group may require for the reporting to be useful. “We can look at the gaps instead of starting with a blank sheet of paper,” says Johnson.

Regarding an alternative solution it evaluated, Johnson says, “There was no ability to transform data between the way that it existed and the underlying ERP system, and the way that the users want to see it.” Datacard wanted the ability to transform data – “to sum it or to add additional measures into it,” says Johnson. In addition to selecting BusinessObjects Rapid Marts, Datacard uses BusinessObjects XI solutions, BusinessObjects Data Integrator software, and the Web-based reporting tool, BusinessObjects Web Intelligence® software.

RESULTS

Datacard enjoys numerous benefits from using Business Objects solutions, including speed of implementation, visibility into data, and enhanced decision-making. “BusinessObjects is helping us manage the business with quicker access to information,” says Johnson. “The speed of decision-making has been tremendously improved, and there is much less argument about whether the data is right or wrong – when you can drill down all the way to the invoice level or the expense report level, the proof is there. We don’t need to have the discussions that we used to have about is this number right, or where did the numbers come from?” Operations and budget reviews that used to involve lengthy discussions now only take a few minutes because everyone has access to the same data and can verify or drill into detail anytime.” Johnson says. “It’s much faster to get to a point where you can make a decision. The availability of data has caused us to react quicker.”

Datacard can see at a glance where information is coming from. “BusinessObjects has increased our ability to see the details,” says Johnson. “It allows us to hold people accountable for the dollars that are either on the revenue side or the expense side. Just having that information has increased the speed of decision-making tremendously.”

For example, in a global benchmarking study, Datacard had to identify costs across the organization for the prior three years. “I had to provide the organizational-level travel cost, labor cost, expense cost, outsourcing – every different type of cost, and a trend for that cost, over the last three years,” says Johnson. The global benchmarking data was pulled from across numerous countries, languages, and currencies – the United States, China, France, Germany, and Spain, among others. “Without BusinessObjects, it would have taken about six months to gather that information,” says Johnson. “With BusinessObjects, we were able to get all of our benchmark information within 10 business days – across the globe – for everything.”

Johnson notes, “Before we had BusinessObjects, we didn’t have a common reporting portal for colleagues. Now, with BusinessObjects, we have the information all consolidated in one place.” With the BusinessObjects Web Intelligence interface, reporting is also much more immediate than it used to be. Instead of a 6-week delay in receiving paper end-of-month reports, says Johnson, “We’ve eliminated the delay of closing the month and the delay of actually producing and distributing the reports – so people have up-to-date information each day.”

Ultimately, Datacard plans to engage each employee with BI. “Our intention is to give every Datacard employee quick access to information,” says Johnson.

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