

GROUPAMA STANDARDIZES BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE PLATFORM FOR IMPROVED SCALABILITY, PERFORMANCE

"Consolidating financial information is a critical process that requires a stable, powerful, and scalable environment. By migrating to BusinessObjects™ XI Release 2, all our applications are now managed on a single platform, providing much better performance and security."

Sylvain Duchêne, Project Manager for Finance, Decision-Making Accounting Department of Groupama Group



Industry

Financial services

Business Process

Financial

Challenge

To develop new projects around the Group's critical data, improving financial communication.

Why Business Objects?

Groupama chose BusinessObjects solutions for easy standardization of all applications on the new platform, improved scalability, and improved performance and security.

Business Objects Products and Services

BusinessObjects™ XI Release 2

BusinessObjects Web Intelligence®

BusinessObjects Data Integrator

CHALLENGE

The Groupama Group is a multi-line insurer and the leading mutual insurer in France. More than 8 million people use its insurance and banking products and services, available in the brands Groupama and Gan. The Groupama SA holding company controls 10 large banking and insurance companies, and about 100 subsidiaries. The Group's accounting department sought to improve financial communication through three strategic projects known as Bibop, Item, and Frisbi, developed in 2004 and 2005 using software from Business Objects, an SAP company.

The Bibop application provides the supervisory authority of insurance and mutual benefit companies with the consolidated status of investments from all the Group's insurance companies. The Item application integrates information from subsidiaries into the consolidated system. Finally, the Frisbi application ensures conformity with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), automating re-evaluation of financial information.

In 2006, Groupama migrated these critical applications to BusinessObjects™ XI Release 2 solutions, with the key objectives of standardizing platforms, acquiring new functionality, improving scalability, improving performance, and establishing a platform for the development of future projects.

APPROACH

Before considering further development of its three key projects, Groupama's accounting department decided to standardize its business intelligence (BI) architecture. Bibop was running on BusinessObjects 6.1, while the Item and Frisbi applications were already on BusinessObjects 6.5. Each application had its own BusinessObjects Web Intelligence® server. The migration eliminated any functional differences. "With BusinessObjects XI Release 2, we pulled everything apart and started from the beginning with a different logic," explains Sylvain Duchêne, project manager for finance and decision-making in the accounting department of the Groupama Group. "Having one architecture per department was better adapted for scalability."

The migration to BusinessObjects XI Release 2 took place without any difficulty. "We migrated all our reports from clients, retaining existing functionality," says Duchêne. "From now on, all our applications are based on the same BusinessObjects XI Release 2 platform and server."

To manage the migration and its 160 programmed tasks, Groupama used the support of the Business Objects consulting teams. The migration effort amounted to 250 person-days. Business Objects supplied 150 of these, for development, migration of jobs, rewriting of input forms, installation of products, expertise, coordination, and so on. "The migration to BusinessObjects XI Release 2 could not have been achieved without the help of Business Objects Global Field Services, as the architecture is new and requires skills that we could not have acquired in a few days," comments Huriaux. The Business Objects consulting teams also helped Groupama to standardize and customize its BusinessObjects Web Intelligence portals for the various applications over which they control access.

The Groupama accounting department decided to migrate its three strategic applications, Item, Bibop and Frisbi, at the same time. However, it expected to run the two versions 6.5 and XI Release 2 in parallel until the new platform was totally stable. Throughout the consolidation

phase, Business Objects guaranteed optimum reaction times and response quality. For project management of the Groupama accounting department, 70% of the migration project time was spent on development, parameterization, and acceptance, 15% was spent on production tasks, and the rest was spent investigating the architecture and on functional analysis. The migration to BusinessObjects XI Release 2 was achieved within the defined deadlines and budgets.

RESULTS

Groupama now has a completely new architecture and highly centralized administration. With BusinessObjects XI Release 2, administration is now managed through a single tool, the Central Management Console component. "The centralized administration tools in the Central Management Console offer improved functionality over the previous version," says Philippe Huriaux, MOE manager of the banking applications sector at the distribution and management studies branch of GIE Groupama SI. "You can see immediately which process is active, with more detailed monitoring, so we can increase performance when needed. The centralized platform is much more powerful. It facilitates the allocation of resources on request; as soon as we are made aware of a demand, we can easily distribute processing on different Windows 2003 servers."

Migrating to BusinessObjects XI Release 2 means accessing a radically new level of security. In fact, managing user rights is now based on Access Control Lists (ACL), like Windows security, and offers more granular security levels. For example, a resource gives rights to users and groups and stores them in the form of ACL. This resource-oriented approach allows more flexible allocation of rights. With the new release, a user may have a "creation" right in one universe, but not in another. "This more flexible security approach is transparent for the user. However, it requires more detailed advanced planning by administrators. With regard to security, the support of the Business Objects consulting teams was invaluable," Huriaux says.

The IT teams had to develop a new application, Radar, which would have been impossible to create without BusinessObjects Live Office software. Radar provides consolidated reporting for the general and financial departments. At the end of each fiscal year, about 20 users retrieve data from a dedicated data mart, format some 200 tables with Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, update them two or three times a day, and then send them to group management. BusinessObjects Live Office integrates perfectly with Microsoft Office tools, and gives users all the transparency and flexibility they need during these very busy reporting periods.

Another new functionality essential to Groupama is synchronization between different universes. "We need to synchronize several universes," notes Huriaux. "For example, we match an Actuals universe with a Forecast universe in order to do variance analyses." These synchronizations are done without any problem on the new platform.

Several migration tools greatly facilitated the migration to BusinessObjects XI Release 2. For example, using the Import Wizard component, it took only half a day to migrate 800 documents that were spread over 15 universes. "For full confidence in results, we developed a tool that can compare an Excel report created under version 6.5 with the same report provided by BusinessObjects XI Release 2," says Huriaux. "We were pleasantly surprised at how easy this migration was. All our documents were handled automatically and without any problem."

Duchêne concludes, "Consolidating financial information is a critical process that requires a stable, powerful, and scalable environment. By migrating to BusinessObjects™ XI Release 2, all our applications are now managed on a single platform, providing much better performance and security."

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