

UNILEVER JUMP-STARTS GROWTH STRATEGY USING BUSINESSOBJECTS™ DATA INTEGRATOR

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Chris Broe, Unilever Information Program Director, Unilever



Industry

Consumer
Packaged Goods

Business Process

Marketing,
operations

Challenge

Essential to Unilever's aggressive growth strategy was a centralized IT infrastructure across its seven regional groups and 300-plus operating units to make corporate data quickly accessible for end users.

Why Business Objects?

Business Objects data integration products allowed Unilever to quickly integrate its numerous data sources to continue its growth strategy to consolidate brands, simplify processes, streamline supply chains, and increase revenues.

Business Objects Products and Services

BusinessObjects XI

BusinessObjects
Data Integrator

BusinessObjects
Rapid Marts

CHALLENGE

Unilever is one of the world's leading suppliers of consumer goods, including household favorites such as Persil, Knorr, Hellmann's, Lipton, and Dove. To keep up with consumer needs and increase operating margins, Unilever wanted to consolidate its 1,600 brands to 400. By consolidating its brands, Unilever could focus on stronger product innovations, strengthen marketing efforts, build a world-class supply chain, and simplify business processes. Dubbed Unilever's Path to Growth strategy, the company has already saved €1.6 billion from global procurement efficiencies, and management expects to save an additional €1.5 billion from restructuring and simplifying processes.



Maintaining 1,600 brands among seven regional business groups and over 300 operating units created a heavy burden on Unilever's IT environment.

Unilever had a decentralized IT infrastructure with multiple environments, including a range of enterprise resource planning (ERP) applications and legacy systems. To reach its Path to Growth goals, employees at Unilever needed fast, easy access to actionable information on both a regional and global

basis. The IT department launched the Unilever Information Program (UIP) to develop an infrastructure to support the Path to Growth strategy. One of the priorities on the UIP agenda was to find a quick data integration solution to allow users to access any number of data sources for in-depth analysis.

To support the Path to Growth information needs, Unilever set out to build an integrated information source to serve thousands of users around the world. Initially, the UIP chose four major business units to:

- Better understand consumer needs and plan with its key global customers
- Monitor the health of its top 400 power brands and competitors
- Identify how to improve and streamline supply chain management worldwide
- Provide business intelligence (BI) and financial reporting on a global basis

Unilever needed to extract data from a multitude of disparate systems from around the world, consolidate it into a single data warehouse, feed it into specific data marts, and then make the data available to relevant end users. Ultimately, the company turned to Business Objects, an SAP company.

APPROACH

The UIP team, headed by Chris Broe, Unilever information program director, began by developing a superstructure with a corporate data warehouse at its very core. Broe explains the team's strategy. "This data warehouse would have to be regularly fed with relevant information from numerous sources, without impacting the performance of the operational systems, integrated, and turned into valuable business intelligence," says Broe. "We also

needed to be sure that the solution was durable, scalable, easily maintained, and flexible to changes that will occur over time.”

Having designed the infrastructure to support the UIP, Unilever understood that it was looking for a solution to bring every source of data together, populate the data warehouse without restriction, and then allow end-user access to meaningful data. To do this, Unilever evaluated several extraction, transformation, and loading (ETL) tools through a rigorous proof-of-concept, and selected BusinessObjects™ Data Integrator software. “We evaluated the ETL marketplace and chose BusinessObjects Data Integrator for its ability to extract data, transform it into usable business information, and load it into the data warehouse,” says Broe.

The data integration software from Business Objects are designed for quick installations to give organizations a jump-start on all of their data integration projects. BusinessObjects Data Integrator has a data server that can access multiple sources and will intelligently manage and optimize the performance of Unilever's data infrastructure. Unilever is also using BusinessObjects Rapid Marts™ packages, which provide prepackaged batch and real-time data movement and business logic for analytics and other data-intensive integration projects, such as customer relationship management (CRM) and supply chain management (SCM) applications.

RESULTS

“We’ve been able to do so much more with BusinessObjects Data Integrator than we first anticipated,” says Steve Applegate, integration manager at Unilever. “It has enabled us to realize our objectives for the Unilever Information Program and more, since we are now looking at replicating what we have done to help the other regions make information more accessible for end users via the deployment of a similar architecture.”

Currently working on data integration projects are five regions that Applegate expects will consolidate data using BusinessObjects Data Integrator as an integration platform. “Brazil has taken the UIP model and has implemented a data warehouse project that has linked some 130 operational companies to benefit from a single source of information,” notes Applegate. “Again, BusinessObjects Data Integrator has been the glue that has enabled this geography to populate a single data warehouse.”

With BusinessObjects Data Integrator, IT continues to play a significant role as Unilever moves along its Path to Growth. “So far, BusinessObjects Data Integrator has proved to be indestructible. BusinessObjects Data Integrator has transformed what we were doing and how we were doing it,” concludes Applegate.

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