



The company

Innovia Films is the world's leading supplier of speciality films for packaging, labelling, graphic arts and industrial products.

The business has a turnover of over 400m, employing some 1,400 people worldwide. Innovia Films has production sites on three continents and dedicated sales offices throughout Europe, the Americas and Asia, along with agents and distributors across the globe.

Problems faced

With 100 sales people across many global locations, keeping everyone up-to-date with current information proved difficult. Ensuring access to information was vital so that sales teams knew the breakdown of figures by sales representative and by region. However, with many working remotely and out on the road, having the information only available within the company firewall made it exclusive to certain people. Limited access was also more acute due to different levels of computer literacy across the sales team, meaning reports were not utilised as well as they could have been.

Generating sales-based reports on a monthly basis was also a problem. While this information was valuable, it took time to collate and create the reports, this led to them being out-of-date very quickly – making it difficult for the executives and sales teams to get a real time view of the business. Being a task primarily carried out manually in Excel, it required a high level of user interaction to produce the required reports. On average, the business analyst tasked to generate the reports from the SAP ERP system would need to set aside two days per month to meet the deadline. Equally, as it was a very admin-based task, it was subject to user error, in some cases leading to output of inaccurate information.

Day-to-day ad-hoc requests were also causing problems for the business analysts. The monthly reports were very basic in terms of the information they included and the sales teams regularly wanted to review and analyse the information in a different way. Quite often, they asked the business analysts to rework the sales reporting to meet their individual needs. This meant the business analysts' time was being spent creating multiple variations of the same reports, rather than analysing trends and adding business value.

Industry:

- Manufacturing

Geography:

- Global

Information needs:

- up-to-date and accurate sales reports

Cognos Partner:

- Simpson Associates

Platforms:

- SAP

Users:

- 100

Solution:

- Cognos analysis and Cognos reporting

Benefits:

- Reduction in time spent on pulling reports together
- Reports are far more user-friendly and globally accessible

Strategy followed

In partnership with the business the IS team at Innovia Films resolved to change the situation and implement an improved reporting process to make information available more quickly, distributed to a larger audience in a more timely manner and in a less administrative-intensive way. Innovia Films reviewed three companies' solutions – Cognos, Business Objects, and Oracle – and involved several members of the sales team to ensure any solution would fit their needs.

The company already had a relationship with Cognos partner Simpson Associates through its use of Cognos analysis solutions, in which sales reporting and manufacturing information was collated. However, this was not in use by the sales team, it was used in the manufacturing area.

“When Simpson Associates gave us a demonstration of the Cognos reporting solution, it really stood out from the competition,” said Jonathon Ridley, Integration Systems Manager at Innovia Films. “The sales teams saw immediately how it could answer their needs and make their lives easier. It was also clear to the IS team that the solution could easily support 100 users from day one but would also scale to meet the growing demands of the company.”

Feedback about the demonstration was that Simpson Associates had the clearest understanding of the sales team's requirements and was able to speak to them about business benefits rather than the technical nature of the product.

Working with Cognos Partner: Simpson Associates, Innovia Films subsequently rolled out the Cognos reporting solution across all areas very smoothly. It is now being used as the main sales data source within the company.

Benefits realised

Staff at Innovia Films now have access to reports which are updated on a daily, rather than monthly basis. More importantly, this is achieved automatically, taking the information from the SAP system, rather than demanding two days of a business analyst's time every month. The information is fed into a supporting foundation layer database (based on a star schema design) and the reports are run from this source.

Having information available every morning means sales staff can base decisions on accurate and timely information. They can also facilitate this securely from any location over the Internet, which again means they are far more likely to have instant access to the information and therefore be able to act on it.

Problems of version control were also solved by the implementation. Having a single point of truth ensures that data is accurate and there is only one set of reports, whereas previously people had been working from different versions. This has made users more self-sufficient and less reliant on the business analyst to manipulate data. In turn, the IS team can now spend less time answering questions about report generation and focus on more strategic development work.

Similarly, the business analyst can now build their own reports and these are significantly more user-friendly. Information can easily be dragged and dropped into reports, making the business analysts less reliant on the IS team. The business analysts can also spend time looking at trends and analysing information rather than simple and time-consuming data input.

Another improvement is in the quality of the master data as the consistency of this data is checked in the foundation layer database (based on the star schema design). All information is cross-referenced and any inaccuracies can be corrected within 24 hours.

Previously these might have gone unnoticed or taken weeks to correct.

"Within Innovia Films, we now have a far higher focus on information. It is easily accessible at all levels and correct, so executives are more likely to use it and our business success is far more transparent. The executive team can answer their own questions about progress and performance through having this information at their fingertips. This means all staff can concentrate on doing their own jobs to the best of their ability," concluded Ridley.

Going forward

The business has since added budget information into the reports and is planning to roll out forecasting capability into the reporting system as well as including stock figures and sales orders. Innovia Films wants to establish one single front-end reporting solution for all company information. It also wants to be able to look at customer trends and how the orders they are currently taking fit within these. This will be very important to ensure it can pre-empt customer requirements and plan orders accordingly.

About Cognos

Cognos is the world leader in business intelligence and enterprise planning software. Our solutions for corporate performance management let organisations drive performance with planning, budgeting, and consolidation, monitor it with scorecarding, and understand it with business intelligence reporting and analysis. Cognos is the only vendor to support all of these key management activities in a complete, integrated solution. Founded in 1969, Cognos now serves more than 23,000 customers in over 135 countries.