



Simpson Associates

## Brenntag UK Ltd

### Case Study: Integrated Business Planning & Reporting

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#### Client Overview

Brenntag UK are a part of Brenntag Group, a global market leader in chemical distribution.

With a consolidation system that was nearing the end of its supported life and a vision to integrate its business solutions, Brenntag embarked on an ambitious project to not only replace their existing reporting tool but build a solution which was sustainable, future proof and would match their vision for the future.

#### Client Overview

"I feel the BOARD system has the capabilities to further deliver my vision. Indeed, we are currently in the 'Glory Phase' of the project and we are making much better use of our people by making much better use of technology."

#### Martin Gratton

Group Finance Director,  
Brenntag UK and Ireland and the Multisol Groups.



## Key Benefits

- Complete visibility of costs and user accountability.
- Remarkably smooth user adoption.
- Full day taken off quarter end group reporting times.
- Senior management confident to deliver strategic vision.
- Streamlined processes delivering coherent, reliable information.

## Summary

Brenntag UK had a very successful, well liked and effective consolidation and reporting legacy system in place. This system had served them well for ten years but was now at end of life and out of support; responding to this challenge Brenntag UK embarked on an ambitious project to not only replace their existing reporting tool but build a solution that was sustainable, future proof and would match their vision for the future.

Simpson Associates worked alongside Brenntag UK to implement this journey over three distinct phases to create a BOARD solution across the UK group capable of delivering their vision

## The Pain

Brenntag UK's vision required a replacement for consolidation and reporting but it extended much further. Brenntag wanted to achieve more;

- To replace their spreadsheet driven budgeting and forecasting;
- To extend their reporting to incorporate analysis and investigation;
- To build and deliver role based, targeted dashboards to staff up and down the management levels.

Not least, they had to significantly better an already well liked system. The new system had a very high bar to clear if it was going to be a success.

"We didn't just want a replacement, we wanted to buy a product which made us future proof for the next 5-10 years and could take us to another level. We wanted a system that could produce our key performance indicators not just our financial numbers and we wanted to do it in one system rather than having it in multiple systems."

## Martin Gratton,

Group Finance Director,  
Brenntag UK and Ireland and the Multisol Groups.

## Solution

With a clear vision in place, Brenntag UK went in search of a product which could satisfy that vision however they found many of the tools they looked at simply weren't flexible enough.

"We looked at other technologies from all the big name vendors," said Ian Meek, Brenntag UK Head of Finance, "however we found these solutions to be too rigid and we were doubtful that they could satisfy our needs. Brenntag UK are a German quoted company and the reporting needs of the business are ever changing, therefore a high degree of flexibility was needed from the chosen solution without compromising a reliability

Being a trusted partner to Brenntag UK over many years, Simpson Associates were approached to present a solution which could match Brenntag UK's vision.

"Having implemented our previous Cognos Finance Application and also provided us with support over numerous years, we felt Simpson Associates had the knowledge and necessary skills to help us," continues Ian Meek.

Knowing the background and understanding the objectives, Simpson Associates presented Brenntag UK with the BOARD solution as a tool to support their vision. BOARD's All in One capabilities would provide Brenntag UK with a solution that met all of Brenntag's financial and business performance needs in one unified solution. Furthermore its 'blank canvas' build allowed complete flexibility and customisation. Crucially, Simpson knew that BOARD's user interface had the "wow factor" that could convince the user community that the effort involved along the journey was more than worthwhile. And so it proved.

## Skills Transfer

The project was split into three initial phases with Simpson Associates taking on full development for the first tranche of work. During this phase the plan was for skills to be transferred to allow Brenntag UK to "own" the software and to then perform the majority of the development in the next two phases with Simpson Associates providing a supporting role. This approach was critical to Brenntag UK; they wanted to develop the same abilities that they had with their old system, skills built over ten years of ownership.



“The way Simpsons did the knowledge transfer was almost subliminal. We came to the end of phase one and we realised we could build our own reports and process without any assistance. Without even realising it we had managed to learn how to build BOARD. For us that was important as we like to take ownership of a product so that if we want to develop it further we can do”

**Kathryn Frosdick**

Project Manager and Group Accountant, Brenntag UK



## A Clear Line of Sight

As is common in many companies the processes of consolidation, budgeting and forecasting and reporting and analysis had been performed across different, separate software systems with the inevitable consequence that data was sourced separately and processed separately and therefore it required further processes to reconcile the resulting data sets. By implementing BOARD, Brenntag UK are now managing all their data in one system allowing them one accurate and connected data set within which they are able to drill down and make more informed decisions far faster than was previously possible, as Kathryn explains:

“Before BOARD, drilling down into our transportation costs was a painful process with costs dotted all over the place. With BOARD all these costs are in one single place meaning we can now drill into all areas of our transport costs and see exactly where they are across the business allowing us to know who is responsible when we are over budget.”

## Ease of Adoption

Going into the project there was a concern amongst Brenntag UK's staff that they be reluctant to adopt a new technology. However within a matter of moments of looking at BOARD, Kathryn and Ian's colleagues could see they wouldn't have a problem adopting it. So much so, it took the project team by surprise.

“People were worried that they wouldn't get the same numbers that they were used to seeing and wouldn't be able build their own reports but within seconds of looking at BOARD they could see that it was easy to use. BOARD's interface is extremely visual and user friendly. We have done very little internal training but the team are already picking up how to use BOARD and are even writing their own reports as well as using the reports we have built for them” said a clearly delighted Kathryn.

## Unexpected Benefits

Brenntag UK went into the first phase with the aim of replacing their unsupported reporting system however what they weren't expecting was the benefit that they gained from the speed of performance of the reporting process.

“We didn't go into this project with a goal to take time off our reporting process however we have actually managed to take a full day off our quarter end reporting times largely because we are not waiting to move data from system to system and because calculation times have reduced. This extra day is a real benefit as not only are we getting our reports a day quicker but I also have far less stress in the department,” says Ian.



## The Vision for the Future

Even now Brenntag UK are not standing still. Following the success of phase one they have now moved on to developing phases two and three of the project, developing a Budgeting and Forecasting Solution first, the first cut of which was built within a matter of days and now a Sales Reporting Solution that is nothing less than role-based, targeted dashboards to all levels of the business; from the Managing Directors and Finance Directors, and from Regional Directors and Operations Managers.

As the Executive Sponsor for the project and the man who defined the vision and initiated the project, Martin Gratton, is now planning to deploy BOARD in the Multisol Group of companies such has been the success at Brenntag UK. Martin assessed the project thus:

“I think we have moved from basic reporting to enhanced reporting. As we integrate BOARD further into the business we have a vision where each senior manager in the business is able to have their own dashboard targeted to the key decision making areas.

The best thing about the BOARD tool is the fact that you can have different levels of overview with one for a Finance Director; another for a Managing Director; a separate Division; a Controller; and Operations Manager, whatever their requirements are, we are able to deliver a bespoke solution for them.

I feel the BOARD system has the capabilities to deliver my vision. We are in the 'Glory Phase' of the project and we are making much better use of our people by making much better use of technology.”

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## Contact us

Should you have any questions or require any further information, will be happy to help you with your request.

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