![Simpson Associates logo]

Inspired Entertainment Incorporated

Case Study: Reporting and Analysis

Client Overview

Inspired Entertainment Incorporated (INSE) is the leading supplier worldwide of Server Based Gaming (SBG) systems; their key customers include Bet365, William Hill, Betfred, Ladbrokes, Genting, Sky Vegas and Paddy Power.

Client Response

"Like many companies, we already had Microsoft SharePoint software, albeit little used, and our Enterprise Data Warehouse was built on Microsoft SQL Server; combined with the Microsoft Business Intelligence and ETL (Integration Services) we saw the opportunity to achieve the necessary step change in our BI solutions."

Key Benefits

• Millions of transactions are processed in near real-time and summarised overnight to produce revenue models to their key customers.

• Cubes and reports are generated and published on-line before their customers' staff arrive each morning.

• Incoming data is transformed and securely transferred to customers to facilitate their own bespoke reporting and analysis.

• The unique relationship between Microsoft's ETL, database, reporting and analysis software has shortened the data processing window and dramatically improved the SLA compliance and customer satisfaction.

• Microsoft SQL Server (Database and Business Intelligence) and Microsoft Office are two sides of the same application – meaning that user adoption (both in-house and with external customers) has been seamless.

Summary

INSE replaces a legacy reporting solution with Microsoft Business Intelligence (BI) thereby capitalising on their existing Microsoft investment. By doing so, INSE have: empowered their end users; improved report distribution; reduced the number of reports in production and given their IT team time to react to change.

Requirements

Following the acquisition of their legacy reporting solution by a larger vendor, INSE were faced with an unwelcome hike in their annual support costs. To add insult to injury, the ETL (Extract, Transform and Load) software was withdrawn in favour of a replacement technology that was older than the one it replaced. Rather than accept this as a 'fait accompli', INSE took the decision to go to market for a new reporting solution; Alex MacGregor-Devlin, IT Director at INSE explains;

"We had had our existing application for a long time. Once we had decided to change it we took the opportunity to have a good look at the market. We researched the whole of the Gartner BI Leaders Quadrant and established that Microsoft Business Intelligence had everything we wanted. It is clear that Microsoft are absolutely committed to the development of their software and it shows. Like many companies, we already had Microsoft SharePoint software, albeit little used, and our Enterprise Data Warehouse was built on Microsoft SQL Server. This, combined
with the Microsoft Business Intelligence and ETL software, gave us the opportunity to achieve the necessary step change in our BI solutions."

Solution

The choice of Microsoft software for all of their ETL, Database, Business Intelligence and Web Portals offered the real possibility of end-to-end process efficiencies and shortened delivery time which were major project drivers. Throughout the day INSE receive millions of transactions from their Server Based Gaming terminals worldwide; a transaction for every click in every location, resulting in an 'end of day' aggregation and summarisation process in the Data Warehouse, that, in itself, already contains billions of transactions.

A further missing ingredient that INSE required was the experience to design an application that exploited the Microsoft components to their maximum, and for that experience Alex approached Simpson Associates. They were expert in both his legacy software and with his chosen Microsoft software and a Microsoft Gold Partner in Data Analytics. Better still, they were experienced in building Data Warehouse and Business Intelligence solutions. Despite having worked with INSE previously, Simpsons were not "a shoo-in" and as ever, INSE were thorough in their process, in Alex's words:-

"We looked at some of the major consultancies but they do many things and are not necessarily subject matter experts which we knew we needed. We wanted someone that lived and breathed data. We knew Simpson Associates from a past relationship and they were able to demonstrate their experience of working with both our incumbent solution and with SQL, Microsoft BI and Sharepoint."

Changing the odds

At the time that they went to market, INSE had little recovery time to resolve any faults in overnight processing. Given the pressing SLAs for the start of the next business day, both for internal users, and more significantly, for external customers, minimising MTR "mean-time to recovery" is a key driver. Two major benefits accrued from the implementation of a unified Microsoft solution.

Firstly, the performance gains accrued by deploying the software addressed the MTR issue; indeed, INSE used BI functionality to build their own internal process quality dashboards that monitor their SLA performance in real-time. Now the odds of meeting their 08:00 SLAs have been significantly improved: where SLAs are in jeopardy, proactive, rather than reactive, is the by-word.

"Before, if a report failed, we couldn't recover until mid-day. Now we can spot things earlier, which means if we ever fail, we can start to recover immediately, so we've become far more efficient with our service delivery."

Alex MacGregor-Devlin
IT Director, INSE
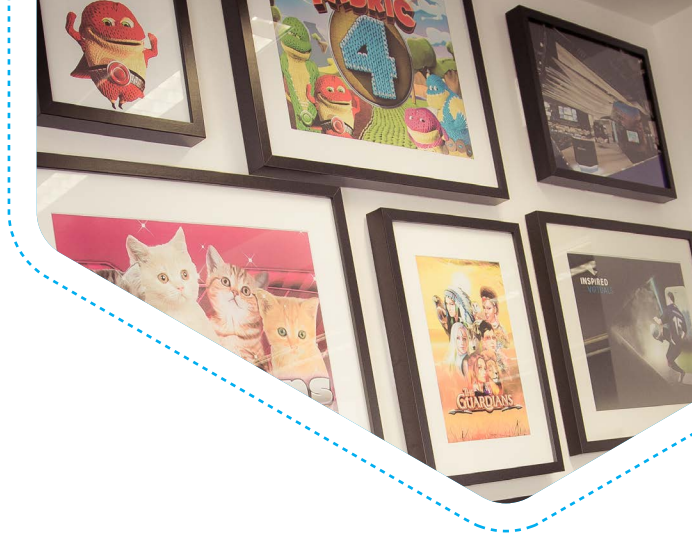
Secondly, they were able to replace email report distribution with on-line report portals and with that came the ability to audit report usage. This, in turn, led to a significant reduction in the number of reports maintained, as it transpired that many reports were in fact obsolete, and those that remained could be improved.

> *"We have been able to eliminate 50% of the reports that we were maintaining. Because reports were being automatically sent out by email we couldn't tell which ones were being used, we only knew that they had been delivered. Deploying those reports in SharePoint portals means that we can audit their usage and we have been able to prune the obsolete reports. We have focused our report development resources on improving the reports that are in high demand, and in the process improved our engagement with the key report users themselves".*

A common language across the business

A major benefit has been the ease of adoption by the user base. Given that INSE's users had their incumbent system for many years it might have been expected that there would be some transitional issues - but far from it. The Microsoft software was familiar from their widespread use of Excel and the take up was enthusiastic. Indeed, BI usage was improved as the old "download to Excel" habit of much legacy BI software was removed, making reporting and analysis much more efficient for the user community. The benefits have gone deeper – the IT Business Analysts have found that they now share a common language with their Excel literate business colleagues, meaning that many more requests are now 'right first time'.

Simpson Associates' role

Whilst INSE had a modicum of Microsoft expertise, they were relative novices in the use of Microsoft BI and they understood that they had little in-house experience of the capabilities of the software. They also had a hundred end users to be trained. Simpson Associates were engaged to ensure that INSE fulfilled their vision in the most effective and efficient manner.

The initial objective was to build a working proof of concept to solve all the limitations inherent in the current application. An excellent example of this was the 'LBO Hourly Cube'. In the legacy application this was limited to 90 days' worth of data, took almost an hour to build and there were multiple occurrences of the same cube to cater for the different customer calendars. The proof of concept identified three success criteria for this:

- Reduce the multiple LBO Hourly Cubes to one Cube that catered for multiple customer calendars;

- Remove the 90 day data limit;

- Implement Dynamic Row based security on a per-user basis to secure the information.

This proof of concept approach was repeated across a number of areas, giving INSE the assurance that they could re-architect their Business Intelligence application and improve its design – increasing its robustness; extending the volume of data available, integrating a single security model; reducing the number of processes and finally, reducing the 'processing window' required to get the reports out each night.

The end result was an efficient, fully adopted application that has positioned INSE to incorporate the Cloud into their Business Intelligence infrastructure. Future benefits await for infrastructure efficiencies, for PowerBI and mobile analytics and for further integration with Office 365. All-in-all a very satisfied customer of both Simpson Associates and of Microsoft.

Support from Simpson Associates

Simpson Associates are specialists in defining, building and implementing information management solutions, which provide better business understanding and improved business management performance.

Our considerable skills and experience enable long-standing relationships with our clients and we have principal partnerships with Microsoft, IBM Cognos and BOARD.

Contact us

Should you have any questions or require any further information, the team at Simpson Associates will be happy to help you with your request.

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