

Narrator: Welcome to an IBM Cognos Express mid-sized business analytics success story video.

In this video IBM and Peritas Solutions, an IBM premier business partner, speak to Sterling Shoes, a leading Vancouver-based footwear retailer, offering a broad selection of private label and brand name shoes and accessories in five Canadian provinces. The company currently employs over 1,100 employees. Recently Sterling decided to upgrade their business intelligence and reporting systems by implementing IBM Cognos Express and utilizing Peritas Solutions' services. We had a chance to speak to Bill Akam, Senior Manager of IT with Sterling. Let's listen as Bill describes their challenges.

Bill Akam: At Sterling Shoes we're – we've embarked upon a fairly ambitious project to replace all of the software in the organization, so everything from the productivity applications right up through our major enterprise applications. And one of the things that created was a need for managing all of the information that's available in the environment.

The end users in our business have been on a journey of a huge amount of growth in the organization, and in the early days of the company it was fairly easy for most people to wrap their minds around the scope of the business and what was happening, but as the organization got larger and larger it was no longer possible for people to know, you know, every store and the product that was in every store and know the store manager and know what was selling in each store. So the biggest challenge for the users has been to find a way to keep track of where the business is.

The key problem we're trying to solve here is getting information into the hands of people who can make decisions in a formatted – in a tool that allows them to surf through the data and really find out what's happening at the core of the business and make good, solid, decisions for them. So I think the key thing we're providing people now is going to, one, view into all of our data.

Narrator: Sterling recently implemented the IBM Cognos Express reporter and advisor modules with solid results and with high praise from both their business users and IT staff. Let's hear more.

Bill Akam: The big – the big benefit of the implementation is the speed of decision-making and the quality of decision-making that's going on in the business. The business community is absolutely giddy with their access to the information now. And so what we're thinking is that as the – you know, as people become more familiar with the data and the information that's there and become more familiar with the tool and how to use it themselves, that we're going to see just an enormous return.

The key IT benefit of our express implementation is that we are no longer in the business of creating ad hoc reports or ad hoc extracts of data out of the business systems for the power users in the organization. Essentially we had one person pretty much working full-time, dealing with business requests. And our expectation is that once that – once we have the complete data set put together that the amount of time that we'll

be spending within the IT world will drop to, you know, a few hours a week.

Narrator: The story gets particularly interesting here, as Bill describes Sterling Shoes' positive relationship with Peritas Solutions, including how Peritas was able to work seamlessly with Sterling, providing a solution quickly and also providing outstanding customer service.

Bill Akam: I think – I mean most telling in terms of customer service is their availability whenever we need them. We were a retail business; we run seven days a week, pretty much every day of the year, and, you know, as we're becoming more and more reliant on the information that's in Cognos, having any kind of a problem on a weekend or an evening is, you know, it becomes a big issue within the organization, and Peritas has always been available whenever we....

Well, Peritas has been a great partner. We're a pretty small organization; we're very reliant on outside expertise. And Peritas is someone who's been able to kind of step in pretty seamlessly into our organization and get us going. We certainly didn't have any express skills or capabilities in the organization at the start, and to have developed it ourselves and then developed some of the reporting capability with it has been a long, long journey. So Peritas has just been a huge asset in shortcutting the time it would take us to get something up and running that's useful to the business.

Narrator: That wraps up today's video. Thank you to Bill Akam, Sterling Shoes, and Peritas Solutions, an IBM premier business partner.

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