

Mold-Masters



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Val Swift, IT Manager, Mold-Masters

Mold-Masters Takes Reporting Beyond IT

Mold-Masters® is the global leader in hot runner technology. They design and manufacture the industry’s most advanced hot runner systems, temperature controllers, and complete hot half solutions. Mold-Masters operates in over 40 countries with facilities in North and South America, Europe, and the Pacific Rim.

This success is accompanied by a wealth of data. To better harness their information and get it into the hands of business users, Mold-Masters chose to augment their multiple SAP systems, Microsoft data bases, and other home grown sources with business intelligence reporting from Cognos. While the vast majority of the firm’s data for reporting comes from SAP BW, a component of SAP NetWeaver BI, some key information and metrics come from non-SAP sources, including SQL Server and Access. Cognos reporting offered Mold-Masters painless integration of all this SAP and non-SAP data along with a self-serve reporting toolset for non-IT users.

Problems Faced

In 1999 Mold-Masters committed to using SAP R/3 for ERP to optimize their business transaction processing. Likewise, they also invested in SAP BW for data warehousing. During their analysis of SAP BW, the IT professionals at Mold-Masters found SAP BW to be their best data warehousing solution. The one area that they felt required extended functionality was business reporting and delivery.

Before implementing Cognos reporting, sales reports were shared as giant, manually created spreadsheets. Sales teams were expected to manually find and format the information pertinent to their needs. A time consuming and frustrating process, manipulating the spreadsheets proved to be unreliable and led to reporting inconsistencies, low user adoption rates, and different interpretations of the same numbers. At the same time, the firm’s IT department was overworked and could not support Mold-Masters’ growing appetite for information.

Industry

- Manufacturing

Geography

- Global

Information Needs

- Self-serve reporting for all users
- Integration of SAP and non-SAP data
- SAP version independence

Platforms

- SAP NetWeaver BI (SAP BW)
- mySAP ERP
- Microsoft (MS) SQL Server
- MS Access
- Other transactional and proprietary systems

Users

- Senior management
- Sales
- Finance
- Manufacturing
- Human resources
- Purchasing
- Quality Management

Solution

- Cognos BI reporting

Benefits

- Drillable dashboards for Executives in all functional areas
- Increased productivity
- 100% user adoption across sales
- Painless integration with SAP BW
- Reduced report production time
- Reduced IT workload



THE NEXT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE™

The IT team recognized that any new reporting solution needed to include:

- A simple user interface that enabled and encouraged end users to write their own reports and queries;
- Data integration for multiple SAP sources as well as MS SQL Server, MS Access, and other proprietary systems;
- Consistent reporting performance regardless of the type or version of ERP data being aggregated; and
- A forward-looking solution that could grow with Mold-Masters' performance management requirements rather than just a point solution for reporting.

Strategy Followed

To select a reporting vendor, Mold-Masters consulted leading analyst firms such as Gartner, Inc. to get a sense of the market leaders in reporting on SAP data. This analysis placed Cognos at the top of their list.

Mold-Masters requested a proof of concept to ensure that Cognos reporting would perform in their unique environment. Given previous experiences integrating 3rd party technology with SAP applications, Mold-Masters allocated two days just to get the connection made between the solutions. To the IT staff's surprise, Cognos reporting was connected in less than 10 minutes by personnel with no prior SAP experience. Mold-Masters integrated all its diverse data sources into a single report and gained self-serve report authoring for all its business users regardless of technical know-how.

"We were incredibly impressed with the performance of Cognos reporting," says Val Swift, IT Manager at Mold-Masters. "We tested the solution rigorously and with users who were not experts in SAP. In our experience, no other add-on to SAP has been as painless."

Mold-Masters adopted a two-phase implementation. Cognos reports were first deployed against their Executive Information System to provide senior management with detailed and drillable dashboard reports for sales, manufacturing, HR, and finance. The new reports replaced an MS Access interface and combined data from SAP BW and MS Access.

Phase two of the project enhanced Mold-Masters' sales reporting system to reduce report production time, streamline distribution to the mobile sales force, and provide flexible analysis without burdening the IT group. As in phase one, the new sales reports designed in phase two consolidated data from both SAP and non-SAP sources.

Benefits Realized

Since launching its new Cognos reporting system, Mold-Masters has enjoyed some dramatic improvements. For the first time, the company can combine MS Access, MS SQL Server, and SAP BW data on the same report for a single version of the truth.

"This has fundamentally changed the effectiveness of Mold-Masters' business processes," says Swift. "The company's productivity level has drastically increased since we eliminated the risk associated with a lack of consistent information."

Instead of ungainly spreadsheets, users now have up-to-date information with which they can build reports and compare statistics among different time periods. Finance personnel can now access an updated balance sheet report in seconds, a process that used to take weeks to complete. Staff are also able to complement data from SAP 'on the fly' with trend data from other systems.

Similarly, sales representatives now create reports specific to their needs such as up-to-date customer information for specific customers. As a result, Mold-Masters has achieved 100 percent report usage across sales. One testament to the success of the reporting rollout in sales is the creation of a new sales analysis position. With self-serve reporting tools, the sales department is able to analyse its own data.

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Complementing this increase in report adoption elsewhere in the organization is a reduced reporting workload for Mold-Masters' IT department. IT is able to focus its energies on other strategic projects rather than addressing continuous requests for help with complex ad hoc reports.

Mold-Masters is expanding its business intelligence capabilities and the scope of its existing projects. Cognos reporting is being extended into quality management, purchasing, and other departments. Ultimately the new approach to reporting will be rolled out to all of the business's functional areas.

"We definitely consider the project a success," says Swift. "With Cognos reporting on top of SAP, business teams spend their time interpreting and analyzing readily available information instead of wasting their time trying to reach a consensus as to the meaning and validity of data. Cognos reporting is the solution for SAP BW and for improving business performance."

