


IAP Worldwide Services



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Scott Simmerman, Manager, Financial Consolidation Systems and FP&A, IAP



IAP Worldwide Services (IAP) is a leading provider of support services and expertise to the US Department of Defense and various federal customers, as well as foreign governments. Offering a comprehensive range of services, the company specializes in responding to the ever-increasing kinds of complex emergencies encountered in the twenty-first century. From building and operating remote base camps, to providing air traffic control services, to generating power for military operations, IAP provides around-the-clock maintenance services that keep military bases running smoothly. IAP also assists the US government in supplying urgently needed disaster-relief supplies to civilians who have fallen victim to natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and tornados.

Challenges faced

To ensure that IAP remains responsive and agile enough to meet the needs of civilians worldwide, the company had to find ways to address the increasing challenges of internal forecasting and budgeting. The financial system that the organization had been using, Hyperion Enterprise, lacked the flexibility needed for the quick collection and consolidation of financial data, particularly of large data sets. Minor changes such as adding an account or project would require all data sets to be re-consolidated, typically taking five to ten minutes for each data set.

In addition to the poor response time, the system could not provide the data integration required for the complex, dynamic information the management team needed for managing a project-based business with detailed resource planning and reporting needs.

Industry:

- Emergency support services

Geography:

- Global

Information needs:

- Collection and consolidation of financial data
- Planning and budgeting system
- Detailed reporting
- Project data integration for complex, dynamic information

Platform:

- Microsoft Windows 2003

Users:

- 60+

Solutions:

- Cognos TM1

Benefits:

- Rapid implementation
- Single, consolidated view of data
- Ability to create real-time, Web-based worksheets and custom dashboards
- Fast response times with large amounts of data and large number of users
- Easy-to-run, accurate, customizable reports for management
- Accurate project tracking of future business opportunities

Strategy followed

With many government units relying on the professional technical and support services offered by IAP, it became imperative to select and deploy a fast and cost-effective business analytics tool that also addressed planning, forecasting, and reporting. Scott Simmerman, Manager, Financial Consolidation Systems and FP&A at IAP, began the software review process by researching the available products in the business analytics marketplace. Simmerman and his team selected Cognos TM1 for its speed, agility, and Web-based format.

Within six weeks of obtaining the TM1 solution—with minimal consulting—the team of ten financial planners was administering the budgeting processes, with input from over 60 project managers and department managers. Within two more months, the team also began to handle monthly forecasts, and within six months, they were performing closings on both active and new business contracts. After nine months, finance was providing weekly new business reporting, which was also integrated into the monthly forecasting and annual planning processes. Recently, IAP was able to complete a comprehensive, monthly 3-year plan in less than five weeks, including a detailed new business analysis critical to the Contingency Operations division, which handles mainly short-term task orders.

The Cognos TM1 technology with its Web interface enables users to create real-time, Web-based worksheets that support the same functions, formatting, and graphic capabilities of Excel through the Web. Because it offers the power to create custom dashboards, TM1 was a natural choice for IAP. Drawing on the advanced TM1 architecture, Simmerman now creates Web-based budgeting worksheets that users can easily update through a browser.

The financial team also found that the stability and scalability offered by the technology provides support for greater numbers and different kinds of users. The system enables high levels of concurrent activity for both read-write and read-only users, which means that a greater number of different users can tap into the solution simultaneously with fast response times. Currently, dozens of IAP finance managers enter the financial data needed to track revenue and margins against budget and to forecast existing and upcoming contracts.

Not only can data now be captured, analyzed, and presented quickly—it has richer content and displays in a single view. In the past, data in separate reports from each business unit arrived on the finance team's desks, requiring a manual extraction and loading of the data into the consolidation system. Now the critical monthly information is consolidated from the business units into a single, cohesive application that is overseen by corporate finance. This capability empowers Simmerman and the finance team to rely little on IT to support the application.

Benefits realized

With the quality of the data enhanced, the IAP executive team can trust that the reports are accurate, and see values of contracts and margins, as well as upcoming revenue streams, for a 360-degree view of business progress. The Cognos application, with its high performance TM1 engine, has allowed Simmerman to supply upper management with reports faster and turn around volumes of data quickly in whatever customized format is needed, saving countless man hours.

“Installing a Web-based analytics solution has allowed us to have a much more in-depth view into resources planning, current project expenses, and the course of new contracts,” says Scott Simmerman. “Our future uses for TM1 are unlimited.”

With all of the new options available for dissecting details in customized formats, custom limited-use reports are generated almost daily with minimal effort, allowing finance to provide management with exactly what they need in an editable Excel format. For example, an executive may request a current forecast that excludes new business details. This report is quickly produced by the finance team through copying the data residing in one of the TM1 models into a formatted document and removing the new business details. Unlike other business analytic technology, the TM1 software enables users to get to the lowest level quickly and work up easily.

As with most of the TM1 customers, IAP has identified new ways to use the technology to serve the finance team. With the ability to load dynamic data quickly from multiple sources, Simmerman has implemented a process that provides the company with weekly new business tracking reports that follow upcoming requests for

proposal (RFP) and provide revenue and profit reports by target. This new application will provide a more accurate tracking of future business opportunities and allow management to compare changes to new business to previous forecasts or plans.

To ensure that the project management team is supported and that contracts are being executed properly, the team uses the powerful TM1 capabilities to configure dashboards quickly. Guided Web applications developed by Simmerman lead users through their specific dashboards, empowering them to conduct their performance management tasks easily.

Customized security layers ensure that each team member views only the material that is applicable to her or his workload. For example, with information from the current forecast through to the end of the year, executives can track trends over time and monitor aging statistics. However, project managers see a different set of dashboards with the ability to drill into revenues, EBITDA as percentage of sales, days sales outstanding, days costs in payables, expenses, and other calculations relevant to the contracts they oversee. Tailoring the data supports individuals in meeting their objectives and achieving success.

Loading disparate corporate data into a business performance management solution is often a complex and time consuming process. However, IAP found that tasks were streamlined with TM1's data management capability in conjunction with the TM1 analytics engine. Gathering data as often as weekly from the existing ERP systems, including Deltek's CostPoint and GovWin, the Cognos solution provides fast and precise downloads of more than 6,000 accounts, which helps to impart timely insight into the performance of the organization. The processes are now performed easily due to customized action buttons created by Simmerman, allowing for data to be passed back and forth among users at the departmental and corporate levels.

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About Cognos, an IBM company

Cognos, an IBM Company, is the world leader in business intelligence and performance management solutions. It provides world-class enterprise planning and BI software and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. Cognos was acquired by IBM in February 2008. For more information, visit www.cognos.com.