Nexans

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Nexans Switzerland Standardizes Corporate Reporting

Nexans is the world leader in the cable industry, with an industrial presence in 29 countries and commercial activity in 65 countries. Over 20,000 employees develop, manufacture, and distribute an extensive range of cable products. The Paris-based company records annual sales of €5.4 billion.

To standardize the operations and consolidate the data of its Swiss offices, Nexans Switzerland chose SAP-certified business intelligence (BI) software from Cognos.

Problems Faced

Before implementing Cognos BI, Nexans Switzerland had a modern software infrastructure based on two strong foundations. The first foundation was a data warehouse that received data from a broad range of sources such as software systems, suppliers, customers, invoices, and product databases.

The second foundation consisted of the SAP® BW platform, which Nexans Switzerland used to develop its financial and debtor accounting, human resource management, and other areas. To assess the data in this system prior to the implementation of Cognos BI, Nexans Switzerland used the Excel-based reporting functionalities in SAP BW.

Despite having a modern infrastructure that most companies would relish, Nexans Switzerland wanted more. The inability to link multiple data sources in a single interface meant users could not obtain a consistent view of what a customer meant to Nexans Switzerland, or what a customer might want from various Nexans Switzerland departments. This inconsistency resulted in a slower response rate to customer needs.

"With our two-tier system, users had different customer views," says Cédric Zbinden, project manager at Nexans Switzerland. "It was hard to combine the right information at the right time for rapid customer responses. Spreadsheet-based reporting contributed to this problem. Version issues,

differing interpretations, keying errors, they all contributed to a reporting system that was too cumbersome for quick analysis and action."

To further improve its productivity and maintain its competitive advantage, the company went in search of a user-friendly solution that would standardize reporting for

Industry
• Cable

Geography
• Global

Information Needs
• Standardized reporting for all users
• Integration of SAP and non-SAP data sources
• Self-serve reporting and query authoring for all users

Platforms
• SAP BW
• Oracle
• Microsoft SQL Server

Users
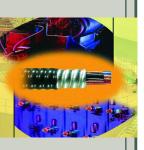• Senior management
• Sales
• Finance
• Accounts Receivable

Solution
• Cognos BI

Benefits
• Querying, reporting, and dashboarding capabilities for non-IT users
• Flexibility for future upgrades
• Painless integration with SAP BW and other data warehouse software
• Immediate assessment of and reaction to customers' needs

the entire system, integrating all data from both its data warehouse and its SAP sources.

Strategy Followed

Nexans Switzerland's software selection team decided to analyze BI solutions from various market leaders to ensure that they found the most user-friendly solution with seamless integration of SAP and non-SAP data sources. At the same time, Nexans Switzerland needed its BI solution to continue performing despite the ongoing changes and upgrades associated with SAP.

Through testing, the group discovered that they were able to put Cognos BI on their current version of SAP without performing an upgrade. Nexans Switzerland chose Cognos BI in part because it recognized the value of BI software that functioned regardless of changes to SAP or its proprietary data warehouse. The fact that Cognos BI is certified by SAP also increased the team's confidence that Cognos and SAP would continue to integrate easily into the future.

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Nexans Switzerland implemented Cognos BI to work in conjunction with SAP BW, Oracle, Microsoft SQL Server, and other databases in their complex environment.

Benefits Realized

Cognos BI allowed the team at Nexans Switzerland to build on its existing data and reporting investments, providing a cost-efficient solution to standardized reporting. In addition, duplication of software, hardware, management, and training was eliminated by the single user interface that manages all data sources.

In two years, user adoption of the company's reporting solution increased by more than 150 percent, and Cognos BI on SAP BW is now used by executives and managers affiliated with the Switzerland sales department. These are business rather than IT users, yet they can easily answer their important business questions and author their own reports. For the Finance and Accounts Receivable departments, statistics such as order, invoice, and delivery status; inventory position; customer and supplier information; and sales status, budget, and forecast are all at their fingertips.

The Nexans Switzerland sales portal is a clear example of how the firm reaps the benefits of Cognos BI. Used by internal and external sales engineers, project managers, and the credit and stock control departments, the portal draws from SAP BW and the Nexans Switzerland data warehouse to consolidate sales and customer data in a single interface. Users can raise queries according to a broad range of criteria and filters, and they can author reports with daily sales numbers and overall sales figures. The portal enables detailed analyses of the entire customer base as well as analyses by product group, salesperson, and team.

The sales portal allows users to be more proactive, negotiating more rapidly and responding more precisely to specific customer needs. "Cognos reporting is a great help to Nexans Switzerland in implementing its philosophy of customer orientation at all levels and in all processes," says Cédric Zbinden. "Individual users can determine what their customers need at any point in time. They can respond to these needs immediately and satisfy customer requirements before they become a problem."

For Nexans Switzerland's staff, a broad range of reporting capabilities is now part of their daily routine. In addition to using dashboards on SAP, querying relevant data at the push of a button, and authoring daily, weekly, and monthly reports, users now send and receive reports automatically by email. This feature reduces the time spent communicating information and shares the same view of the organization with all users at the same time. As a Web-based solution, users can create and distribute the reports they need from any location.

The multilingual capabilities of Cognos reporting also help to drive user adoption – especially in a country that hosts as many languages as Switzerland. Reports are available automatically to French and German language users.

"Cognos BI brings real added value to our data system," says Cédric Zbinden. "We can now spend time and energy exactly where it's needed without focusing on any unnecessary extras. We can be more proactive, and we're better armed to manage our processes to a successful conclusion."

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