Al Rajhi Bank invests in better decision-making and improved performance with IBM Cognos 8 BI and Planning Solutions

Overview

■ *Challenge*
 Rapid expansion in Malaysia meant that Al Rajhi Bank needed a data analytic solution system that would enable its employees to:
- *Fulfil ad-hoc requests for branch and corporate level reports on a timely and automated basis.*
- *Generate comprehensive reports for management review.*
- *Design and customise key performance indicator (KPI) reports.*

■ *Solution*
 With the help of Sunway Business Systems, Al Rajhi implemented IBM Cognos 8 Business Intelligence (BI), a comprehensive Business Intelligence system that would integrate all relevant key indicators into a standard, multi-dimensional and consistent platform.

■ *Key Benefits*
- *Meaningful reports can be quickly and easily produced.*
- *Detailed analyses can be generated at any time without the need for IT intervention.*
- *Managers are now able to set varying access rights appropriate to different users.*
- *Standardised the reporting process – providing branch managers and senior executives with a comprehensive and timely view of their business.*
- *User-friendly and intuitive system makes new types of analyses possible.*
- *Users can now drill deeper into specific information in order to identify issues or patterns, and address them proactively.*
- *Managers and executives are now able to make better decisions, manage closer to their objectives, and support the growth of the company as it continues to expand its operations.*

Al Rajhi Bank, established in Saudi Arabia in 1957, is one of the largest Islamic banks in the world with total assets of US$ 45 billion, a paid up capital of US$4 billion and an employee base of over 7,500 associates. Al Rajhi Bank is the first foreign bank to be awarded a full banking license by Bank Negara Malaysia in 2006, making Malaysia the first foreign expansion for Al Rajhi Bank outside of Saudi Arabia. By 2010, Al Rajhi had grown to 20 branches across Malaysia, and has also embarked on further plans for growth both within Malaysia as well as in the Middle East, with branches planned for Kuwait and Jordan.

Al Rajhi Bank's success in Malaysia is due to its dedication to building strong customer relationships and commitment to delivering better products and services. Integral to this strategy is the ability to quickly and accurately consolidate, analyse and report key performance, financial and customer-related data from its network of branches.

"Our main goal is to provide senior management and business users with the information and reports they need to run their businesses and to make better decisions," explained Mohd Najid Yahya, Al Rajhi Bank's Senior Vice President for Business Intelligence in Malaysia.

Better reporting for better decisions

Al Rajhi Bank operates several separate core banking systems to support its business in Malaysia, including retail banking, general ledger, and ATM systems.

Like many other financial institutions, the IT department of Al Rajhi Bank was challenged by the need to fulfil ad-hoc requests for branch and corporate level reports on a timely and automated basis. "Most financial institutions which embark on best of breed IT solutions will inevitably face data integration, integrity and consolidation challenges," explained Mohd Najid.

Mohd Najid added, "We were acutely aware that, given our rapid pace of growth, a dynamic, user-friendly and flexible analytic solution was required to support the design and customisation of key performance indicator (KPI) reports in order to provide comprehensive historical data trend analysis for greater visibility into the full scope of our business and financial operations with minimum technical support."

The quest for an effective business intelligence solution

To overcome these challenges, Al Rajhi Bank decided to implement IBM Cognos 8 BI, a comprehensive business intelligence system that would integrate all relevant key indicators into a standard, multi-dimensional and consistent platform. IBM Cognos 8 BI would provide the bank with the means to quickly and easily produce meaningful reports and, if required, generate detailed analyses at any time, without the need for IT intervention. Additional features included the ability to set varying access rights appropriate to different users, and the self-service capabilities of IBM Cognos products.

"IBM Cognos 8 BI provides a flexible, scalable and user-friendly architecture which is well-suited for our needs, allowing us to make better use of data to improve operations, find new revenue opportunities, reduce cost and improve efficiencies," noted Mohd Najid.

For the implementation, Al Rajhi decided to work with Sunway Business Systems, a certified IBM Cognos consultancy outfit, and the only approved support provider for Cognos in Malaysia.

Kelvin Koh, Chief Technology Officer of Sunway Business Systems, believes that the key success factors that enable Sunway Business Systems to position itself strongly in business analytics include its team of experienced technical and business consultants who are capable and confident in project delivery and post-implementation support. These consultants play an important role in recognising and articulating business pains, enabling them to create and implement a robust business analytics solution to address those pains, and to help customers achieve their desired business performance strategy.

"With IBM Cognos 8 BI solution, we are confident that we can achieve the business analytics for the bank because of its analytical richness, its ability to handle large data volumes, and its single consolidated interface," said Koh. "We had already proven our capabilities in past projects with other banks and financial institutions, and are also able to provide post-implementation support, giving Al Rajhi the peace of mind it needed."

Exceeding all expectations

With IBM Cognos 8 BI, Al Rajhi Bank is now able to standardise its reporting process – providing branch managers and senior executives with a comprehensive and timely view of their business. User-friendly and intuitive, IBM Cognos has provided users with the ability to quickly create and generate corporate performance management and trend analyses, without the need for manual spreadsheets and IT intervention.

Mohd Najid explained, "IBM Cognos 8 BI has met our expectations by providing us with a comprehensive view of our business, identifying exceptions and enabling us to better serve our customers and run operations more efficiently."

Furthermore, the team has been able to raise its value to the business; instead of spending most of its time extracting and manipulating data, it can now provide strategic advice as to the types of analyses that are possible with the new system.
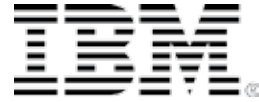
"We are now able to access exciting new capabilities with the solution," declared Mohd Najid. "For example, users can now drill deeper into specific information in order to identify issues or patterns, and address them proactively."

As a result, managers and executives are now able to make better decisions, manage closer to their objectives, and support the growth of the company as it continues to expand its operations in Malaysia.

The solution has also provided Al Rajhi Bank with a robust foundation from which to launch future initiatives. "We are planning to introduce executive dashboards to provide a comprehensive view of how the business is performing, as well as forecasting modules to help business users predict trends," said Mohd Najid. "The possibilities are almost endless."

For more information
To learn more about the IBM Cognos 8 BI and Planning Solutions, please contact your local IBM sales representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit:
http://www.ibm.com/software/my/cognos