

Business intelligence from visualmetrics and Cognos gives Premier Pizza Player the upper crust

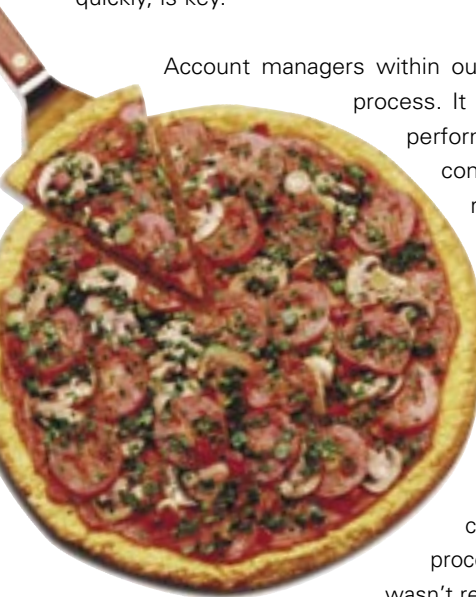
Grocery retail is one of the most competitive sectors in the retail industry. Key to success is being able to keep prices low whilst increasing quality.

Our client, a sector leader, makes own-label chilled and frozen pizzas for some of the biggest names in the UK grocery market. Each week, it produces one million pizzas for companies such as ASDA, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and the Co-op. In fact, if all the pizzas it baked over the course of a year were stacked on top of one another, they would rise to 70 times the height of Mount Everest!

As a result, keeping track of production, sales and profit margins in a constantly changing market, is a real challenge.

► The Challenge

Balancing supply and demand, planning production and maintaining financial control are vital to any manufacturing company. However, in food retail, where product shelf life is short and contracts exacting, contract profitability and renewal depends on volumes being met on schedule and to budget. Working closely with customers to anticipate changes in buyer behaviour as they happen, identifying the causes, and taking appropriate action quickly, is key.



Account managers within our client's business play an important role in this process. It is their responsibility to continually monitor sales performance and forecast against contract, taking into consideration seasonal or promotional variations and royalty payments for branded sales.

Our client had a number of operational control systems in place, designed to optimise resources and assess sales and business performance. These systems used a combination of automated reporting and manually collated reports. Preparing these reports was highly labour intensive and the process of manually sourcing data meant errors could creep into the figures and delay the whole process. Typically, data from the previous week's sales wasn't ready until the middle of the following week.

According to our client's IT manager, the company began to realise it needed to be much more responsive to changing marketing conditions – smarter data collection and better, faster, access to information was seen as critical to this challenge.

► The Solution

Our client realised that the ideal solution would be to add a Business Intelligence system to the existing operational control applications. This would allow it to give staff and customers improved access to more accurate information about sales revenues, production budgets, and cost and margin analysis.

Challenge

- To maximise contract benefit while maintaining customer satisfaction

Solution

- **visualperformance** and **visualrevenue** analysing data from financial, sales and operational control systems
- Cognos PowerPlay providing drill down information through extranet and intranet

Benefits

- Actual performance against budget is clear and immediate
- Material and overhead variances are identified and remedies applied
- Shared information builds customer satisfaction and helps bring lock in
- User self service reduces costs and improves productivity

As a result, our client began working with Business Intelligence Solutions Provider **visualmetrics** to provide an answer. As our client explained, “the project was designed to meet specific business needs. From day one, IT involved potential users in the planning process to ensure that the technology we selected would meet their needs and be easy to use.”

The first stage of the project was to centralise company data in an Oracle data warehouse. This was set up to capture data from the existing accounting systems as well as the associated resource management applications.

visualmetrics built a customised reporting application, which included a set of pre-defined standard reports on sales analysis. This was designed to improve sales performance management as well as to provide financial control.

Cognos PowerPlay was selected to provide fast access to, and analysis of, company data and to simplify the reporting processes. PowerPlay is designed to analyse vast quantities of data quickly and allows users to tailor their queries to meet their individual needs. It is currently being used by 15 staff within including the sales director, key account and finance managers and the IT team. It means they can quickly understand the ‘why’ behind the data, and take corrective action when required.

► The Results

Following the implementation of the Business Intelligence solution, staff have faster access to more accurate and more detailed information than before.

The Cognos based application, developed by **visualmetrics**, generates a number of standard weekly reports into sales by brand, type and customer. These are now produced every Sunday night, ready for use the following morning. Previously, users had to wait until the middle of the following week for this data.

Sales analysis now offers better information about actual, budgeted and forecasted sales by customer, product, brand and promotion, as well as details relating to royalty payments. Much of this data can now be shared with customers in order to develop additional promotions or merchandising schemes, and to ensure targets are met for individual contracts or stores.

Better financial data has also resulted in improved analysis of standard costs and variances relating to materials, distribution, labour, overheads and discounts.

In addition, Cognos PowerPlay means staff can scrutinise business performance in near real time according to their individual needs. The technology means they can slice and dice data to meet their own reporting requirements and no longer have to rely on the IT department to do this for them.

“More information means more control over the business,” explained our client. “Giving users access to better information, and the ability to undertake their own analysis, puts them in a much better position to manage their clients and respond to changing market conditions quickly.”

► Going forward

Our client is currently looking into modifying the reports currently available in order to provide further in-depth analysis to its account managers.

About visualmetrics

visualmetrics is a Business Intelligence (BI) solutions provider that develops and delivers best of breed Analytical Applications, utilising BI tools, to its focus markets. Based in Chester, United Kingdom and founded in 1997 it has an annual turnover approaching €2 million. **visualmetrics** also offers consultancy services to construct custom applications tailored to a client's specific requirements.

visualmetrics has developed specialist project methodologies for the delivery of its solutions - **DRIVE** for custom Analytical Applications and an accelerated form, **@DRIVE**, for standard applications. These services span the full application life cycle from functional specification to application support and enhancement, ensuring that project risk is managed and ROI is maximised.

visualmetrics maintains partnerships with leading product, application and service partners in the BI market. **visualmetrics** sees its value not only in assisting its customers to exploit data as information on which to base decisions, but as intelligence to promote insight into businesses performance.

Our clients include market leaders such as Exel, Greencore Group, Unipart, CIPD and Levi Strauss.

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