

5th Year In Business



Editors Letter

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As **visualmetrics** progresses into its 5th year in business, there continues to be significant shifts in the Business Intelligence market, and we featured the intentions of the main-stream vendors to extend their reach technically, through both technical developments and acquisitions. Alongside

Business Objects & Cognos, both Microsoft and Oracle continue to make this an area of focus for their extensive product ranges.

However, technical advancements alone are not sufficient when

our **"paymasters"** are looking for a return on their software investment, and vendors such as Business Objects are striving to extend their product penetration through a partner network, without any degradation in the quality of the software solutions delivered.

At **visualmetrics**, we believe that 2007 will be a year of consolidation in both the vendor market, and also in the clients' use of BI technologies, and therefore it is important that **Integration** companies such as **visualmetrics** have the right levels of quality of consulting skills, to exploit the software products from our vendors' partners, and apply them for enhanced business value for our client community. It is our responsibility to assist our clients in understanding **what, when & how** to exploit all the functional advancements in these BI product sets, how they can be most effectively deployed, and when, for best business and technical benefit.

The recent acquisition of Hyperion by Oracle is another example of a consolidatory market. However, this acquisition is more strategically focused on Oracle attacking and undermining the SAP market, than any clear product strategy and direction of Oracle into the Business Intelligence arena. Given the portfolio of developed and acquired technologies over the last 3 years, the BI messages which are coming out of Oracle are confusing and disjointed to say the least.



Certification



visualmetrics has recently completed the Migration Certification process for Business Objects XI Release 2, as part of our continued focus on quality commitments to our BI partnership, and enhancing the focus on quality for project delivery. As other certifications become applicable, **visualmetrics** will ensure they are at the forefront of these technical certifications -

The question for BI product migrations is then "When to upgrade"? Given that a lot of product upgrades do not bring any true incremental business value, they are centred on retaining product support for a current product version, or operational and technical features which make the daily maintenance and management of these BI applications more efficient. **visualmetrics** offers a migration planning and delivery service, which assists clients in the effective business, operational and technical planning of projects of this nature.

For more information, please contact technewsletter@visualmetrics.co.uk.

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About the Client

Middlewich is an outsourced professional buying body, who purchase fresh, long life, and frozen goods on behalf of FMCG Retailing organisations. Their specialisation is based on understanding the most effective product range to suit a client's consumer market, identify the best source of product supply on effective commercial terms, and then provide a Just in Time (JIT) supply chain of product order, through shipment, to retail store delivery and replenishment, ensuring that both consumer and FMCG client benefit from the service they offer.

The Business Problem

Middlewich needed visibility of sales revenues, margins and volumes by product by store on a weekly basis. Also an ability to highlight pricing differences of products by location was required. The client needed to understand the levels of wastage, damages and price reductions that were occurring across the stores and product range, so that they could optimise the stock requirements, against sales demand to ensure maximum customer satisfaction, whilst delivering against the profit and cashflow targets set within the business.

The Operational Problem

The transaction volumes were too high for users to manipulate in an excel spreadsheet, to provide the business insight required. Therefore it was difficult to analyse the trends in data and identify poor operational metrics, which could then be actioned, from a business perspective.

The Technical Problem

What were the source applications data was being drawn from, and how many of these were there, in what types of database products?

The source data for Sales, Wastage, Damages and Reductions reporting, were provided in a flat file format from the Kwik Save EPOS tills. Reference information such as master store files, products and promotions were provided by the client in an excel format.

How frequent were the feed updates? What total and incremental data volumes were there?

The data was collected daily and the reporting application was updated incrementally, through the **visualintegrator** Data Warehouse application, on a weekly basis for the client. The weekly data volumes are 150,000 records, and there is currently a total of 11 million records held to date.

What was the impact of business reporting, based on this data management?

The client was able to identify trends and variances quickly. Understanding slow and fast moving products by location helped the inventory planning cycle. This in turn helped reduce the wastage volumes by ensuring that stock levels were in line with demand. Price variations were identified and action taken to rectify the discrepancies. Trends of stock damage were easier to identify and take speedy corrective action. Additionally, products accidentally left on promotion in certain locations were identified early and action taken accordingly.

How did they slice data/reports for different user communities?

Reports were created at store and area manager level. Senior management could drill down on the data to understand the factors driving positive and negative trends.

What was the level of inter-action between report users/consumers and report generators/data custodians?

The reports and their results were reviewed by senior managers, area managers and store managers to ensure that the information was relevant to the decision making processes.

How were reports distributed/disseminated to users?

Senior managers used multi-dimensional OLAP cubes to analyse and drill down on data. Report consumers received static electronic, or hard copy versions of detailed reports that could be used on the shop floor as a reference point, in stock management.

How did reporting process impact the business users operational actions?

Due to better Information Insight, area managers and store managers are able to keep a closer eye on stock levels of fast movers, levels of wastage, damages, price variations, promotional price reductions, relative performance to other stores and regions. Senior managers have gained a better understanding of which product lines to develop and where the high margin opportunities exist.

NEW CLIENTS

On visualsupport

We are delighted that so many of our newer clients are making the long term commitment to **visualmetrics** by investing in our **visualsupport service**. These include:

Middlewich

Unipart Automotive

Colas

O2

visualsupport offers a single point of reactive & preventative support for both the BI application, associated data warehouse programs, and underlying BI & Database software products. As these applications become more business critical, there is a need to have the business and technical assurance, that your BI & Integration partner is able to back up the internal IT resources, when there are times of technical difficulty. As the saying goes, **"to fail to prepare, is to prepare to fail"**.

For further information contact enquiries@visualmetrics.co.uk

Business Objects News

- Business Objects have recognized that the needs and demands of the mid market, defined as companies with a turnover up to £3,000M are converging with those of traditional FTSE 100 companies, and there is a need for a single integrated BI product offering. With this in mind, Business Objects has launched a series of product bundles for this mid-market: Standard, Professional & Premium Editions.
- Business Objects Crystal Decisions® Premium edition is designed to address the complete business intelligence needs of mid-size companies, from flexible ad hoc reporting and dashboards to powerful data integration to insightful performance management.

Business Objects Crystal Decisions® Premium edition is a complete business intelligence solution that helps mid-size companies transform the way they use information to drive their business. It combines flexible ad hoc reporting, analysis, and dashboards with insightful performance management to enable strategic decision-making across your company. Plus, it's backed by a proven business intelligence platform and powerful data integration capabilities to ensure reliable and trusted information access.

Business Objects Crystal Decisions® Premium edition is designed to address the complete business intelligence needs of mid-size companies – in a single, affordable solution. It adds insightful performance management to the reporting, analysis, and data integration features of the Professional edition to ensure trusted, strategic decision-making at all levels of your company. The Premium Edition is the complete business intelligence solution that will transform the way your company uses information to improve business performance, and drive your company's growth.

For further information, contact [visualmetrics](mailto:visualmetrics@visualmetrics.co.uk) on technewsletter@visualmetrics.co.uk

Cognos acquire Performance Dashboard Company

Celequest, based in Redwood City, USA....

Celequest develops performance dashboard software, branded as LAVA, that is offered as either licensed software or software-as-a-service. The software lets business managers view key performance information about operations as a series of constantly updated charts and graphs presented in a customized web-based dashboard. For example, a risk manager can use the LAVA dashboard to get up-to-date information on a client's credit limit and history. Celequest's technology already provided out of the box interoperability (including drill-down, portal integration, single sign-on security) with the Cognos 8 BI suite. The company's underlying Java-based technology has remained more or less the same. It is based on a streaming data flow engine and in-memory cache that streams transactional data for analysis. Cognos said that initial work will ease tighter product integration in the future and expects to roll out an integrated offering to market in March, which will form part of a broader Cognos BI and performance management solution.

Cognos 8 Go! MOBILE

Available in the first half of 2007, Cognos 8 Go! Mobile will extend the value of the proven Cognos 8 Business Intelligence architecture by providing users with access to timely, secure, and personalized information on their Blackberry® wireless devices. Cognos 8 Go! Mobile is the latest addition to the Cognos 8 Go! Family of access modes designed to help you increase business intelligence user adoption rates within your organization. These access modes let users interact with BI content using familiar applications or devices, such as Blackberry®, search engine, MS Office application, or Web Browser. With Cognos 8 Go! Mobile, users will be able to increase their productivity and improve their decision-making when working remotely by accessing operational and, strategic information about customer orders, product performance, and more.

Simple administration

- Remote installation and centralized administration will let you distribute functionality and upgrades to users quickly.
- Reports consumed on a Blackberry® will leverage existing metadata, security, roles, workflows used in Cognos 8 Business Intelligence.

Theft and loss protection

- Single security augmented for mobile user needs
- Remote database locking
- Key required to access and decrypt device database

Effective data compression

- Small report footprint
- Encryption during transmission and on the device
- Data storage for offline viewing and use

Business Objects - recently announced...

The acquisition of Armstrong Laing Group (ALG), based in Knutsford, UK.

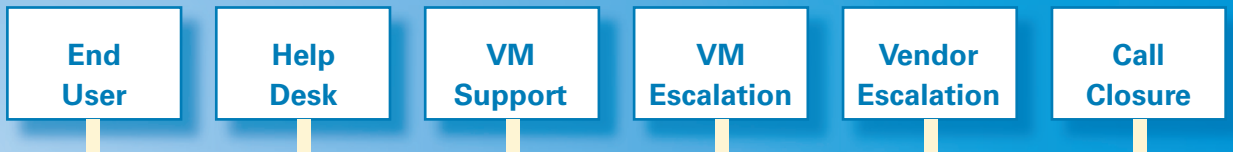
ALG Software is a global provider of enterprise performance management (EPM) software that is used for profitability management, activity based costing, predictive planning, and strategic business performance measurement.

"The combination of Business Objects and ALG Software makes perfect sense, from both a company perspective and from the perspective of our customers," said Mike Sheratt, founder and CEO of ALG Software. "ALG Software brings to Business Objects a strong solutions portfolio, as well as talented management, development, and sales teams with proven track records. We are excited about the future direction of enterprise performance management at Business Objects, and feel ALG can help play a key role in its success."

The company has more than 400 customers worldwide, including American Express, British Airways, British Telecom, Heineken, HSBC, Royal Bank of Scotland, US Department of Labor, and WHSmith. ALG Software's profitability management and activity based costing solutions represent a fast-growing segment of the EPM market and complement the existing Business Objects EPM solutions.

visualmetrics customer support process

STAGE 1.	A support registered service logs query with IT contact registered with visualmetrics
STAGE 2.	IT contact registers the query with visualmetrics , by phone, fax or e-mail
STAGE 3.	visualmetrics Support Department log and validate the problem to screen for a resolution
STAGE 4.	visualmetrics Support communicate all actions to the client
STAGE 5.	visualmetrics Support will look to resolve the problem or escalate it internally
STAGE 6.	If the problem cannot be solved internally, it will be escalated to Vendor Support
STAGE 7.	visualmetrics Support is the point of liaison and communication throughout

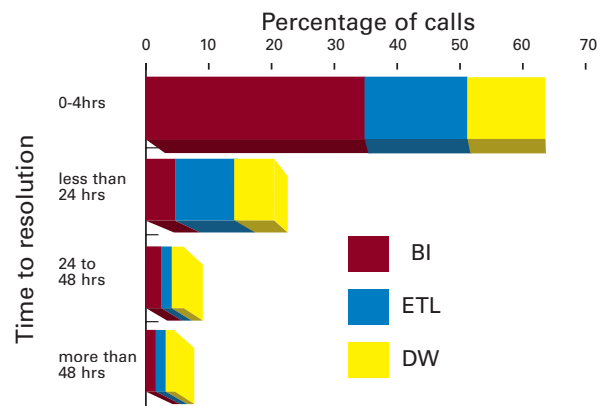


scores

on the doors

The performance of **visualmetrics** in call handling and problem resolution is a corner stone to the Support Services which we offer to our clients. Measuring this against our contracted Service Level Agreements (SLAs) is an important element of this service. We continually track these measures to ensure we are fulfilling and exceeding the contracted SLAs and expectations of our clients.

VM SUPPORT CALLS - TIME TO RESOLUTION



"our business partners"

To achieve the business objectives of being a premier organisation in the delivery of Analytical Applications, which derive business value for its clients, **visualmetrics** recognises the need to have a range of business partners who fall into three distinct categories:

○ **Product partners** who develop industry leading BI tools & BI suites. These are core components of the applications which **visualmetrics** already has, or will develop for custom specific reasons.



○ **Application partners** who have market leading operational applications, in chosen business sectors & operational areas. Their clients have requirements for information analysis, which is satisfied by the applications and consulting services of **visualmetrics**.



○ **Service partners** who are recognised industry experts in management consulting, and technical consulting areas.



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