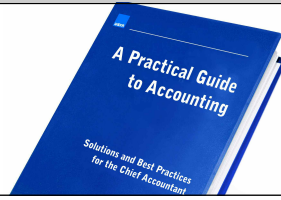


WEKA



“IN THE SUBSCRIPTION PLANNING PROCESS HERE AT WEKA, WE FIND THAT DEALING WITH EXISTING CUSTOMERS IN PARTICULAR IS HIGHLY COMPLEX BUT ALSO VERY IMPORTANT. IN THIS AREA, COGNOS HAS GIVEN US NEW WAYS OF FULLY EXPLOITING OUR OPTIONS FOR PLANNING WITH SAP R3-DERIVED DATA.”

— NICOLAS SCHLOESSER, HEAD OF FINANCE AND IT, BOARD MEMBER, WEKA VERLAG AG

BACKGROUND

The Swiss publishing company, WEKA Verlag AG, was set up in Zurich on 17 August 1978. It is a subsidiary of the Germany-based WEKA group, which now includes 35 businesses spread right across Europe. WEKA Switzerland has around 50 employees and a portfolio consisting of more than 100 publications in the fields of management, finance and tax, law, human resources, construction, technology, the environment, IT, medicine and education. For many years now, WEKA has trawled through new trends, laws and technical requirements to identify the issues that are relevant to their customers.

The resulting information is then brought together in a way that will be of use in practitioners' actual work and is published in the relevant media. Formats include loose-leaf editions, brochures, slides, newsletters, software titles, training material, intranet applications and online, Web-based solutions. Wherever appropriate, the benefits of specific media formats are combined to create a practical and useful package. And because experts always need to keep abreast of the latest developments, WEKA includes regular updates in its product offering.

The publisher's thousands of corporate clients, including the top names in the Swiss business world,

cannot afford to spend significant amounts of time searching for the information they need. They need integrated, high-quality complete solutions that are up to date and expertly structured. WEKA's authors are proven experts with substantial practical experience, while for some of its publications WEKA cooperates with renowned institutes and institutions.

THE PLANNING SITUATION AT WEKA

WEKA Verlag AG's publications, together with the online access to the information databases, are offered to customers in the form of subscriptions. In order to plan successfully for its subscription business and the associated production and financial development requirements, WEKA faced a variety of challenges. In particular, the company's portfolio of around 300 products, which are distributed via six different sales channels using five different subscription models. And with these, business from existing customers is handled completely differently from new business. Nicolas Schloesser, Head of Finance and IT, describes the situation: "Our billing models involve differing subscription periods, ranging from three months to one year. And what's more, the invoicing system is different for each update, with the number and frequency of updates varying. It's important to plan out the profits and losses achieved from subscribers, the cancellation

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rates of existing and new customers, as well as the print run requirements. All of these factors are highly varied and extremely complex. With the planning options available through the SAP R3 system, this type of planning was simply not possible.”

Financial tasks and billing processes are prepared at WEKA using the SAP R3 system, and until recently planning was carried out using a vast number of complicated, interrelated Excel spreadsheets. This resulted in a high risk of error, which meant that a great deal of work was required for monthly reporting, and led to maintenance difficulties and a degree of inaccuracy in the planning processes.

Because of the requirements and constraints to which WEKA’s new solution was subject to, the publisher needed to be able to utilise the SAP R3 data whilst replacing the many existing Excel spreadsheets with an integrated, centralized solution. Significant added value was also needed in the form of quicker results, reduced time spent on the job, and greater flexibility in introducing changes to the system. As Nicolas Schloesser says, “Flexibility is important in all sorts of ways. We needed to be able to map out a variety of changing scenarios and also simulate and plan new business models. Our requirements involved ensuring that the application was flexible enough to meet all of these challenges whilst allowing us to make changes ourselves.”

FASTER PROGRESS AND ON-TIME PROJECTS

As a first step, the capabilities of Cognos Analyst and Planning were demonstrated as part of a presentation tailored to WEKA’s requirements. Next, a package price was negotiated with the certified Cognos partner ENTECH Enterprise Technology AG to include product licences and consulting services. A meeting was then held in August 2004 involving the three members of WEKA’s project team and this was followed by a brief training course. Following the prototyping phase conducted on the basis of a detailed project specification – a task that in itself represented valuable “on-the-job” training for the WEKA team – implementation was completed within two months.

The publishing company now uses both Cognos Analyst, the analytical component of the solution and Cognos Planning Manager. This is used for developing the models and metrics and for mapping out the performance drivers for the entire organisation. The products are designed for use by financial specialists and therefore require no expert IT knowledge. They allow complex models to be created, including calculations and cause/effect simulation analyses, as well as offering multidimensional flexibility so that any other relevant drivers can be identified.

At WEKA’s offices the Cognos planning solution is used principally by three key members of the Management Accounting team.

SUCCESSFUL ROLL-OUT WITHIN A SHORT TIMEFRAME

The project objectives were achieved on schedule, enabling operational budgeting for 2005 to get underway with the new system in September 2004. As well as the challenges previously mentioned, which were all successfully met, WEKA also benefited from greater accuracy and an improved overview of its whole planning process. The Management Accounting team were also able to build on this knowledge to introduce their own modifications. All in all, WEKA has been convinced by the system’s flexibility in allowing changes to be made to the business model and by its enhanced analytical and scenario-planning options. Nicolas Schloesser concludes: “The Cognos solution has finally allowed us to introduce a system for continuous planning.”

ABOUT COGNOS

Cognos, the world leader in business intelligence and corporate performance management, delivers software and services that help companies drive, monitor and understand corporate performance. Cognos serves more than 23,000 customers in over 135 countries. Cognos enterprise business intelligence and performance management solutions and services are also available from more than 3,000 worldwide partners and resellers.



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