

Data Warehousing & Business Intelligence for an Online Spread Betting Company



RSinteract



Microsoft®
SQL Server™

Company Profile

This case study concerns an online spread betting company which has captured approximately 70% of the UK's sports spread betting market and is recognised as the world leader in its field. Founded in 1992, the company now caters well over 40,000 spread bettors.

Core Issues

The client identified a need to improve the collection, integration, analysis and delivery of information throughout the organisation. These activities were already being performed but the supporting systems and processes did not form part of a cohesive organisational business intelligence strategy or supported solution. The solution needed to support more than 70 users, a database of around 75,000 customers which had generated in excess of 45 million records to date. The solution also had to allow access to a central, validated reporting data warehouse, designed to flexibly cater for new reporting requirements and comparative analytics, whilst allowing the user to identify their preferred delivery mechanism.

A project was initiated to address core issues including:

- ▶ The inadequate performance and complex user interface of the existing Oracle Discoverer (reporting tool) resulted in poor uptake by users.
- ▶ Driving business improvement and increasing organisational effectiveness was not possible with the current reporting mechanism.
- ▶ The over-reliance on certain individuals to provide the bulk of the required periodic and ad-hoc reporting requirements.
- ▶ Analysing trends and identifying records influencing them (e.g. for marketing or planning purposes) was not facilitated by the current database design.
- ▶ Standard key performance indicators (KPI's) and their underlying data were not easily accessible at all levels of the organisation.

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Challenge

Improve collection, integration, analysis and delivery of information throughout the organisation.

Solution

SQL Server 2005 Data Warehouse built with Integration Services, consolidating data from multiple disparate systems. RSinteract browser-based self serve reporting on information from Data Warehouse. SharePoint Portal Server 2003 intranet and Office Business Scorecard Manager 2005 Dashboards and KPIs.

Benefits

Consolidated Corporate Data. Rapid implementation. Enhanced reporting and analytical capability. Faster decision support. Reduced complexity and reliance on individuals. Low total cost of ownership (TCO) - reduced licensing and support costs.

Business Intelligence Expertise from ICS

Microsoft Business Intelligence experts ICS conducted a scoping consultancy exercise at both the client's and ICS's offices. Key individuals were interviewed regarding their current and future reporting requirements. Following the interview stage, further technical analysis and prototyping was carried out. The software components of the proposed solution included Microsoft® SQL Server 2005, RSinteract (ICS's end user tool for SQL Server Reporting Services), Microsoft® SharePoint Portal Server 2003, Microsoft® Office Business Scorecard Manager 2005 and Microsoft® Office Excel 2007.

Phased Rapid Implementation

Phase 1

Initial data warehouse design and production, standard report definition and ad-hoc reporting capability for the imminent release of the latest line of business spread betting application.

Providing reporting capability for the latest application was treated as the highest priority. The new reporting capabilities were delivered to not only offer a level of reporting equivalent to that available from existing systems, but also to improve on both the underlying data available and the mechanisms of interrogating that data, both of which were unnecessarily restricted with the current Oracle Discoverer implementation. The new functionality provided allowed more complete (to a lower level) direct data interrogation via an intuitive interface which does not place such high requirements in terms of skills on the user.

Phase 2

To build on the initial data warehouse design providing replacement reporting functionality to that currently provided by static Crystal Reports in the existing core transactional system. This included integration of data (using Microsoft® SQL Server 2005 Integration Services) from the Trading, Budgeting, Marketing, CRM and Credit Management modules.

Additional improvements in reporting and analysis efficiency, improved access to information at all levels of the organisational hierarchy and the elimination of disparate reporting data sources were also achieved.

Phase 3

Design and delivery of a Microsoft® SharePoint Portal Server 2003 intranet for executive access to reports and Microsoft® Office Business Scorecard Manager 2005 Dashboards and KPI's for performance management

Delivery Timescales

A lack of reporting facilities of any kind on data captured in the client's new online games application meant that timescales for the implementation of the project's first phase were very tight. SQL Server 2005 Integration Services empowered the ICS Business Intelligence consultants, allowing them to rapidly develop robust extract transform and load (ETL) procedures. SQL Server 2005 Analysis Services gave ICS the tools to flexibly prototype and deliver a business user oriented, high performance data warehouse. RSinteract supported these exercises by exposing the power of SQL Server 2005 Reporting Services to end users in an interactive, highly intuitive, zero footprint web browser environment.

Ease of Use

A core issue driving this project was the over reliance on key individuals to operate the existing reporting solutions and provide information to their own specific departments. The two main factors underlying this situation were:

- ▶ Understanding the transactional systems and the interrelationships behind the source data.
- ▶ The training required to operate the incumbent reporting applications.

Microsoft® SQL Server 2005 Analysis Services gave ICS the opportunity to build and maintain a centralised data warehouse, providing a 'single version of the truth' and present it in easy to understand business terms.

RSinteract enhances this experience by providing a highly intuitive means of developing Microsoft® SQL Server 2005 Reporting Services reports, with virtually no training. This self-service approach to information analysis completely removes the reliance on individuals and empowers users enabling them to access accurate, pre-defined, pre-aggregated information in a format they want, when they want it.

Capitalisation on SQL Server

Whilst some Microsoft® SQL Server instances were already in use, ICS has helped the organisation capitalise on this investment by harnessing the functionality of Integration Services, Analysis Services and Reporting Services. Deploying SQL Server in a strategic manner and utilising the redundant business intelligence modules and increased the return on investment in Microsoft® SQL Server 2005.

Reduced Licensing Costs & TCO

With the introduction of the Microsoft Business Intelligence Solution, savings on licensing costs, support and maintenance for the Oracle Discoverer Suite and Crystal Reporting software are estimated to be in excess of £100,000 (US \$200,000) in the first year and £25,000 (US \$50,000) year on year.

RSinteract

RSinteract is the essential end-user tool for SQL Server Reporting Services. It allows business users to generate and interact with reports dynamically and intuitively via a standard web browser. Using RSinteract and Reporting Services the business can self-serve information information at all levels for analysis and decision support.

ICS is BSI ISO 9001:2000 certified, a Unisys strategic partner, and a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner.

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