



Microsoft SQL Server Business Planning System for Douwe Egberts UK

A solution based on MS SQL Server 7.0 and MS OLAP Services to integrate data, provide flexible reporting and generate fixed financial documents for the premier coffee company Douwe Egberts UK.

Background

Douwe Egberts was originally a family-run business in the Netherlands, started in 1753. In 1978, the company was bought by Sara Lee (then Consolidated Foods). After this, Douwe Egberts roast and ground coffees were introduced to the UK and a selection of new brands were launched, including Coffee for One, After Dinner, decaffeinated and instant.

Throughout its 250-year history, Douwe Egberts' insistence on quality combined with its ability to nurture new business, has led to its becoming one of the leading coffee companies in Europe. It is also a respected roast and ground coffee brand in the UK and has over 25,000 employees worldwide.

Issues

Douwe Egberts UK wanted to implement a business planning system that would allow the Finance, Administration and Sales and Marketing departments to view the actual and forecasted results of the business on a variety of levels and platforms.

The requirement was for a system that would:

- be user-friendly and provide clear screen navigation and good summary information
- provide flexible reporting with the ability to transfer information easily into Excel
- integrate all data currently held in a number of databases and provide scalability for future growth
- be simple to update and support.

It was also critical that the system lead users to the areas of the business that require attention.

Solution

The solution was to transfer data to a single MS SQL Server 7.0 database, and build a customised MS Excel 97 front end. This provides data-entry screens for forecast sales and financial data as well as an element of fixed reporting, such as profit-and-loss accounts. In addition, MS OLAP Services creates a cube, which is then used by OLAP@Work, via Excel, for all flexible reporting requirements. The single database covers several issues, different units of measurement, weekly versus monthly forecasts and SKU level sales versus brand-level forecasts.

This system replaces the previous system without requiring rewrites to the three existing data feeds (two from external suppliers providing weekly and monthly actual sales information, and an internal data extract from a separate system for products distributed internally).

This information, together with the forecast data entered via the Excel front-end, is processed into a single cube used by OLAP@Work. In addition, financial information such as prices and costs, is entered via the Excel front end and stored in the same SQL Server 7.0 database, but not used by the cube. This information is used to generate fixed financial reports.

The cube is processed immediately following any new data loads or hierarchy changes. This prevents the need for the specific weekly cube builds that the old system required. The front end also provides additional capabilities such as hierarchy maintenance.

Thorogood input

As an independent company specialising in Business Intelligence solutions, Thorogood applied our knowledge and experience of the leading technologies to determine the best solution for the client, taking into account the timescales and budget available.

Thorogood then completed the design and development using a team approach to maximize individual skills. Once the system was implemented, user training and ongoing support were provided to ensure a smooth transition to the new system.

Benefits to the client

With Thorogood, Douwe Egberts has a single development partner providing guaranteed support and the capability to develop a complex application across four different technologies and vendors.

A pool of consultants has grown containing knowledge of the client's culture and systems. These people can be called upon should spikes of demand arise.

In today's technological age there is no shortage of information, but how do you access the facts you want, when you want them and in the best possible format? To help you, Thorogood makes sense of data. We combine our skills in IT and numerate analysis with business understanding to provide you with solutions to help you get ahead in today's marketplace. Independent since 1987, our focus is to find exactly the right system to match your needs.

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