



Advertising Monitoring System for Haymarket Business Publications

Updating an advertising monitoring system for the UK's leading private magazine publishing company. The system is now Year 2000 compliant, is more flexible and has greater strategic potential. The solution is based on Microsoft SQL Server and OLAP Services.

Background

Haymarket Publishing is the largest private magazine publishing company in the UK, publishing a wide range of business and consumer titles. Its business publishing division publishes weekly, monthly and annual publications, including Campaign, Marketing, PR Week, Print Week, Management Today, Promotions & Incentives and IT Training. These publications operate in an extremely competitive market. The Advertising Monitoring System was originally written 10 years ago in order to track and monitor the competitive performance of both the titles published in-house and those of main competitors.

Issues

Haymarket Business Publications needed to review the system because:

- it was not Year 2000 compliant
- it was inflexible
- it could only produce a limited number of reports.

Additional functionality and flexibility were also required to allow the user department to meet increasing demand from internal client departments and make informed strategic decisions.

Solution

As Haymarket Business Publications was already using SQL Server 6.5, migrating to SQL Server 7.0 provided the obvious solution. Included in the licence at no additional cost were MS OLAP Services, a highly functional OLAP engine and an effective Data Transformation Tool (DTS). These could be utilized for the Advertising Monitoring System.

The system data was broken down into two areas:

- client data was stored in the SQL Server 7.0 database with a customised Visual Basic interface using Active Data Objects to communicate with the database
- titles data was modelled as multi-dimensional cubes giving flexibility to provide the data using any combination of categories

This allowed users to create their own reports or analyse data on line through the front-end tool OLAP Work. OLAP Work is an off-the-shelf product, which operates as an add-in for Excel. It allows the user to set up quick ad-hoc reports and once the reports are built they can be saved and reused.

Thorogood input

Having worked closely with Microsoft for 12 months prior to the commercial launch of MS SQL Server 7.0 and MS OLAP Services, we had many consultants trained in the technology and were able to use the full product functionality to deliver the system to tight deadlines.

Thorogood was able to take the risk out of adopting the new generation of low-cost Business Intelligence tools for maximum business benefit.

Our close links with many of the vendors providing front-end tools for MS OLAP services, including Brio, Business Objects, Cognos, ProClarity, OLAP Work and Maximal, enabled Haymarket Business Publications to pick the product that was right for its needs.

Benefits to the client

The system was implemented quickly and effectively to meet the Year 2000 deadlines. It offers the following benefits:

- the system is cost effective
- users can access the data in the format most appropriate for their needs
- the system uses off-the-shelf technology customised to meet exact requirements
- it allows scalability for the future, as new titles and categories are added
- the system provides fixed and flexible reporting with a reduced learning curve for users because of the integration with Excel

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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