

## Customer Profile

Information Builders enables agile information solutions with business intelligence (BI) and integration technologies. WebFOCUS – the most widely utilized business intelligence platform – connects to any enterprise system or application and enables simple and intuitive interaction with information.

### ABC Financial Services

#### Snapshot

##### Organization

ABC Financial Services is the number one provider of club-management solutions to over 1,500 health and fitness clubs across the U.S.

##### The Challenge

Give club owners the flexibility to slice and dice performance metrics – without burdening users with a cumbersome reporting environment.

##### The Strategy

Consolidate information from multiple back-office systems and present it to users via a self-service dashboard; utilize existing security architecture to authenticate users; offer a broad range of reporting options, from specifying input criteria to selecting output formats.

##### The Results

Customers enjoy greater flexibility and unlimited potential for accessing many types of information. The software also saves time for internal analysts responsible for custom reporting.

##### Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS, Education, Consulting.

ABC Financial helps health club owners manage operations and boost revenue.

## Strenuous Business Intelligence Workout

### Gets Fast Results at ABC Financial

It's a familiar economic pattern: young companies derive the majority of their revenue from a core product or service that gives them an edge in their industry. Once the market is saturated and the company reaches critical mass, profitability is sustained over the long term by selling additional products and services to its customer base. That's when business intelligence (BI) technology becomes so valuable – supplying fresh insight into operational efficiency, cash flow, customer preferences, buying patterns, and a host of other critical business functions.

The health and fitness industry is a prime example. While the initial revenue stream comes from selling health club memberships, most clubs prosper by selling premium services to existing members – from private coaching to aerobics classes and concession sales.

ABC Financial Services has seen this progression many times. Since 1981, the company has helped club owners nationwide improve their management tactics and boost

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bottom-line profits. As a leading provider of billing and club management solutions, the Little Rock, Arkansas-based company handles every aspect of accounts receivable processing for more than 1,500 health and fitness clubs across the U.S.

Thanks to ABC’s best-in-class billing services, club owners don’t have to bother with setting up direct deposits, processing electronic payments, or managing coupon programs for their members. Instead, they can focus on building a profitable business – a job that’s getting progressively easier since ABC adopted business intelligence (BI) software from Information Builders.

### **Pumping Up User Reporting Options**

While ABC Financial is known for its highly efficient billing system, until recently its reporting capabilities were limited, making it difficult for club owners to extract specific information about enrollment trends, cash flow, and campaign-management scenarios. ABC’s in-house programmers wrote RPG programs to extract DB2 data from the company’s main billing systems, which reside on an IBM iSeries platform, creating a series of static reports.

“We had a bunch of detail reports but no consolidation,” recalls Tonya Millican, special projects manager at ABC Financial. “That meant our members had to manually combine data to get a complete picture of their businesses.”

According to Millican, ABC Financial wanted to give club owners the flexibility to slice and dice performance metrics, but they didn’t want to burden users with a cumbersome reporting environment. “We had been providing the same basic reports for 15 or 20 years,” she continues. “We made these reports available via the Web, but they still took the form of static PDF files. We wanted more flexibility for visualizing and summarizing data.”

ABC Financial conducted a comprehensive comparison of BI tools from Cognos, Business Objects, and Information Builders before selecting WebFOCUS. “We insisted on an easy solution that would not require in-depth training,” says Millican. “WebFOCUS is very user-friendly and easy to deploy. You don’t need a programming background to use it.”

While Millican was attracted to the efficiency of the WebFOCUS reporting environment, senior officers at ABC Financial were impressed with Information Builders’ service during the sales and proof-of-concept process. “Information Builders took the time to understand our needs and provided the right mix of training, consulting, and mentoring to ensure our success,” says Bob Whisnant, ABC Financial’s chief financial officer. “Our new reporting environment makes us more competitive – and helps our customers get a better handle on their businesses.”

### **Gaining Momentum With BI Software**

To jumpstart the development effort, Millican attended training classes from Information Builders’ education department. She took two courses that focused on WebFOCUS Report Painter, a graphical report-development environment within the popular WebFOCUS Developer Studio. While Millican has no formal IT background, she was able to quickly gain proficiency with the new software, producing reports and graphs and deploying them as part of a self-service dashboard.

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ABC Financial also hired an on-site contractor from Information Builders Consulting to install the software, develop a BI dashboard with drill-down capabilities, and create an initial batch of reports. It was a fast implementation cycle: In less than 90 days, ABC’s small development team completed the training classes, developed a Web-based reporting application, integrated WebFOCUS with their existing security architecture and created 60 new reports to monitor billing, collections, membership status, receivables, and a host of other functions. They also conducted alpha and beta tests with their user base and started rolling out a self-service reporting environment to 1,200 health clubs.

“We followed a rapid cycle of development, testing, and refinement,” confirms Millican. “Once we went live, we solicited feedback from our five largest clients, then gradually opened access to other companies.” The initial feedback has been very positive. “Our main challenge is cultural: getting users to adopt the new system,” she adds.

### **Burning Off Calories for Business Users**

Today, WebFOCUS satisfies the reporting needs of a wide range of users, from professional analysts to casual business users.

Customers enjoy greater flexibility and unlimited potential for accessing many types of information. The software also saves time for internal analysts tasked with custom reporting.

WebFOCUS consolidates information from multiple systems to present information to authorized users on demand. It works with ABC’s existing security architecture to authenticate users and control access to sensitive data. These users enjoy a broad range of reporting options, from specifying input criteria to selecting output formats.

“We didn’t have to change anything in our IT infrastructure to take advantage of these advanced reporting capabilities,” says Millican. “Everything works the same as before, but instead of seeing 25 PDF reports, they have links and tabs to take them into various parts of the reporting environment, where they can select precisely the data they need.”

WebFOCUS’ structured ad hoc reporting capabilities gives club owners a snapshot of cash flow and customer churn metrics. Reports are highly parameterized, allowing them to select precisely the data they want. For example, if they want to review revenue from yoga or hip-hop classes over the previous three quarters, they can quickly select that information and display it in graphical or textual form, drilling down to see how each service contributes to the bottom line.

“Previously, this same information was available, but it was buried in one giant revenue report,” Millican says. “Also, the format was fixed so our users didn’t have many options for how data was sorted and displayed.”

By contrast, WebFOCUS is very flexible. Club owners can select certain data, visualize it how they would like, choose the output format they prefer, and even export data directly into Excel for further analysis.

## Find Out More

To find out how our solutions can help your company succeed, talk to an Information Builders representative today. Contact your local Information Builders office, visit us at **informationbuilders.com**, or in the U.S. and Canada, call **(800) 969-4636**.

### **A New Standard for Fitness in Reporting**

Ultimately, ABC Financial expects to have two or three users at each customer site, approximately 3,000 users total. Most of them will access the reporting environment twice a month during the billing cycle, but over time ABC expects they will discover the power of BI for accessing many other types of business information as well. Because WebFOCUS has been architected for fast, efficient deployment via the Web, it's ideal for extending reporting capabilities to everyone who impacts the business. And since today's users intuitively understand browser interfaces, there is virtually no learning curve for accessing and receiving information.

Based on their quick progress and success with the new BI software, ABC Financial has selected WebFOCUS as its enterprise standard for reporting and information delivery. Eventually, they plan to use it internally for many types of operational reporting.

"Adding WebFOCUS to our billing and club management applications will ensure we remain at the forefront of our industry," concludes Whisnant. "The reporting software makes club owners more effective and more profitable – and that's good business for everyone."

