

Customer Profile

Information Builders enables agile information solutions with the WebFOCUS business intelligence (BI) platform and integration technologies from iWay Software.

Henny Penny Corporation

Snapshot

Organization

Henny Penny Corporation develops, manufactures, and distributes equipment for restaurants, supermarkets, and institutional food service operators throughout the world.

The Challenge

Make it easier to access current information about production, testing, tracking, and sales across a worldwide enterprise.

The Strategy

Use iWay adapters to connect various back-end systems, and create a secure, Web-based BI dashboard that can instantly connect authorized users to any data in the corporation.

The Results

Users at remote sites can instantly access critical data from headquarters, managers can make better decisions based on real-time data, and production personnel can take advantage of workflow improvements to boost productivity throughout the company.

Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS, iWay Software, and Information Builders' Consulting.



Get It While It's Hot!

Food Service Equipment Manufacturer Dishes Up Real-Time Data With WebFOCUS and iWay

With a hardy appetite for innovation, Henny Penny depends on business intelligence solutions to streamline production, reduce inventory costs, and boost output. By continually scrutinizing its manufacturing and distribution processes, managers can remove waste and eliminate unnecessary effort – not just in the production lines, but throughout the entire organization. Technology from Information Builders and iWay Software, an Information Builders company, enables them to deliver enterprise information on demand.

“WebFOCUS and iWay enable us to provide real-time production data and eliminate growing silos of data,” says Don Garland, information systems development manager at Henny Penny. “An operations manager in our Suzhou China facility can log into the BI dashboard and get real-time data from our corporate headquarters in Ohio.”

Henny Penny develops, manufactures, and distributes industrial food service equipment for restaurants, supermarkets, and institutional food service operators in every corner of the world. The company was founded in 1957 to create and market

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the world’s first commercial pressure fryer, and has remained at the forefront of the food service equipment industry ever since.

Today, with production operations in the United States and China and representative offices in Mexico, Europe, and Asia, Henny Penny is a leader in its field. Until recently, however, managers were hindered by antiquated reporting systems, prompting the IT team to recommend an upgrade to their production reporting processes.

“Henny Penny’s mission is to be the supplier of choice for selected food service and retail accounts by blowing away our competition with special customer care and unmatched responsiveness,” says Garland. “Day-old data was a hindrance in accomplishing that. With our previous information architecture, we could only obtain production data once a day. If we missed the cutoff, we would have to wait until ten o’clock the next morning to get the latest information.”

Upgrading the Menu

At the time, Henny Penny relied on a combination of custom-developed and packaged reporting systems built using Microsoft Visual Basic, Access, ASP, and SQL Server, in conjunction with a JD Edwards ERP system running on an IBM AS/400 computer. Even after installing a more current version of JD Edwards, their reporting processes remained cumbersome, primarily due to a heterogeneous data environment. “Our manufacturing personnel had to pull data from our ERP system to build applications, and then generate reports from there,” Garland explains, citing one example. It was not a recipe for success.

Garland and his team decided to spice up their business intelligence capabilities and Web-enable key workflow processes. They sampled reporting solutions from several technology vendors, including Vanguard, QlikTech, and Cognos, but they were not satisfied with their capabilities. “Although those systems offered improved reporting capabilities, they lacked the functionality and architecture to take us down the road, beyond reporting,” Garland says. “We wanted true Web-based development capabilities and a reporting architecture that could support a worldwide user base in a cost-effective way. Most importantly, we needed a versatile back-end infrastructure for accessing and combining different types of data – ideally, in real time from our production systems.”

Henny Penny believes in having a small IT group that does the heavy lifting for a larger group of power users called the Extended Developers Team. WebFOCUS Developer Studio provides a collaborative environment that supports this model well. Developers are permitted to create new reports from the data in their domains. New reports are tested by the IT group before being moved into the production domain. Once a report is fully tested, they simply expose it through the dashboard, where users can access it with a standard Web browser.

Fresh Ingredients

Henny Penny was almost through with the evaluation process when they heard about Information Builders. “We immediately liked the WebFOCUS Business Intelligence Dashboard and Developer Studio, which includes a complete back-end environment for data access, integration, and event monitoring,” Garland says. “And as a reporting environment, WebFOCUS seemed exceptionally easy to use.”

“Within a few weeks we built a WebFOCUS application that provides the plant in China with the necessary information for fabrication and assembly.”

Before signing the contract with Information Builders, Henny Penny's CFO asked the IT team to prove the value of WebFOCUS beyond simple sales reporting. “We reached out to our Extended Development Team for input,” Garland continues. “In WebFOCUS, we saw an environment that could support processes far beyond sales reporting – including intranet support, Web development, manufacturing, testing, and many other aspects of business intelligence.”

The team particularly liked the flexibility of WebFOCUS Developer Studio. “The WebFOCUS development environment is like five tools in one,” Garland maintains. “Our IT pros can control security and data access. Meanwhile, our Extended Developers can access the data sources they need to build reports. None of the other products we looked at had this level of flexibility.”

Henny Penny used iWay adapters to join manufacturing data stored in Microsoft SQL Server and Microsoft Access with bill of material data from JD Edwards. “iWay adapters allowed us to join data sources directly without having to stage data to separate reporting files, as we used to do in the past,” says Andrew Greene, database administrator at Henny Penny. “Now there is no lag time in our access to production information.”

The IT team at Henny Penny worked with a pre-sales group at Information Builders to create this reporting architecture. They also attended classes hosted by Information Builders' Education department to bolster their skills. “After a brief consulting engagement, we were off and running, writing reports on our own,” Greene says. “The iWay adapters were easy to work with and install, and WebFOCUS is a very easy tool to pick up.”

Preparing a New System

As a manufacturer of industrial equipment, Henny Penny needs to track a variety of information related to the development, fabrication, and assembly of its products. At the time of evaluating WebFOCUS and iWay, Henny Penny needed to provide fabrication and assembly information to its China operations. With an imminent startup of operations at the Suzhou plant, they needed a BI system in place as soon as possible.

At the Ohio location, Henny Penny relied on a custom Web application written in Visual Basic called the Paperless System. The Paperless System took three consultants nine months to develop. It was supported by internal resources from IS and Manufacturing. Modifying the existing Paperless System required outside consultants. Based on the scope of the original development project, executives at Henny Penny were concerned about completing the task in time.

Susie Keehner, systems specialist at Henny Penny and a member of the Extended Development Team, took on the challenge of recreating the Paperless System using WebFOCUS. Fresh out of Information Builders Education classes, Keehner made full use of the drill-down and composite reporting capabilities that WebFOCUS offers. Over a five-week period, she created the basic reporting and drill-down capabilities. With a little help from the local Information Builders office, she added composite reporting to give the application the look and feel of the original Paperless System. Keehner then worked with the Information Systems group to build the China Operations Dashboard – and delivered the application in record time.

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**.

International Flavor

Henny Penny's WebFOCUS system quickly proved its worth with the China Operations Dashboard. "Before we had WebFOCUS, we had no easy way to share up-to-the-minute information with our China operation," says Keehner. "Within a few weeks we built a WebFOCUS application that provides the plant in China with the necessary information for fabrication and assembly."

Keehner has no formal training as a software developer or analyst, yet she finds WebFOCUS easy to use. "Information Builders showed us how to link data types and stack reports to create cohesive presentations," she says. "We quickly devised a number of reports for our users in China, and then placed them in the China Operations Dashboard for easy access."

The WebFOCUS BI Dashboard has become a central clearinghouse for all the information needed to manufacture new equipment, including engineering drawings, bills of lading, equipment setups, document libraries, procedures, inspection sheets, and parts specifications. For example, users can type in a part number and obtain a composite report that provides links within a bill of material. The links connect to information such as drawings, standards, and purchasing information.

"The dashboard provides us with a simple interface that can connect to any data at Henny Penny," Keehner sums up. "It bridges our global organization by providing a framework that lets us link to many different applications in a secure environment."

"The China Operations Dashboard is a perfect example of how WebFOCUS and iWay bring many aspects of our business together," Greene adds. "We can type a part number into the WebFOCUS dashboard and obtain all the information we need about the status of our production operation. WebFOCUS reports run in a matter of seconds."

Catering to Business Users

Garland and his team plan to leverage WebFOCUS for a variety of additional reporting applications in the near future, such as to assist with test procedures and parts tracking. They also plan to use WebFOCUS ReportCaster to automatically e-mail sales reports to representatives in the field.

"iWay makes all the connections on the back-end so we can deliver information through a single window in the WebFOCUS dashboard," Garland says. "We are already seeing real productivity benefits and workflow improvements as a result of this architecture."

Best of all, users throughout the company can obtain accurate information more quickly. As a result, they are making better decisions than they were a year ago. "It would have cost a significant amount of money to extend our custom reporting system, and it still would not have contained all the features that WebFOCUS and iWay provide," Garland concludes. "It's clear we made the right choice by selecting Information Builders."