

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.

Travel and Transport, Inc.

Snapshot

Organization

Travel and Transport (www.tandt.com), the eighth-largest travel management company in the nation.

The Challenge

Improve reporting, analysis, and information-delivery capabilities for employees and customers responsible for tracking corporate travel spending.

The Strategy

Create an efficient, easy-to-use reporting environment to analyze travel purchases via the Web.

The Results

A comprehensive analysis and reporting environment that helps customers obtain optimal pricing from airlines, hotels, car rental agencies, and other vendors – saving some companies millions of dollars per year.

Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS, Information Builders' Consulting, Education.



Travel and Transport, Inc.

Uses WebFOCUS to Track and Analyze Travel Expenses

Self-Service Reporting Environment Saves Millions for Corporate Customers

Many large companies are using Internet technology to automate purchasing and procurement functions. The stakes are high – on average, indirect procurement purchases account for 30 to 60 percent of the total spending for an organization, or about \$500 billion annually in the United States alone, according to AMR Research. Yet, almost one third of nonproduction purchases are made outside of a formal purchasing process, resulting in a 15 to 30 percent escalation in processing costs.

Employee travel purchases are a prime example. For many companies, travel arrangements are made on an ad hoc basis, making it difficult to analyze costs or leverage corporate purchase agreements. Travel and Transport, Inc. is improving this situation with a business intelligence (BI) environment called eTek Review that helps companies like Kimberly-Clark, MetLife, and American Family Insurance plan, track, analyze, and budget their travel expenses more efficiently.

“WebFOCUS is important to our business. It helps our customers monitor employee spending, book travel with preferred vendors, and negotiate corporate purchasing agreements that can save them millions of dollars per year.”

“With Travel and Transport’s state-of-the-art reporting technology, MetLife is able to measure our travel program through data analysis, standard reporting, and the ability to create ad hoc reports dynamically,” says Thomas F. Molesky, director of Travel Services at MetLife. “Metrics derived from actionable data provide direction and drive us toward our goals. This is key to helping us negotiate with our suppliers, enforce our travel policy, and save our company money. Travel and Transport’s leading-edge product has helped us to meet – and in some cases, exceed – our travel goals.”

Headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska, Travel and Transport is the eighth-largest travel management company in the nation, with over 650 employee-owners located nationwide. The company has extensive experience in multiple businesses, including travel management, loyalty solutions programs, meeting and incentive planning, and leisure travel services.

“For most of our corporate customers, we thoroughly manage their travel, from planning and reservations to billing, fulfillment, and ongoing analysis,” says Michael Kubasik, vice president of Information Technology Services at Travel and Transport. “WebFOCUS is important to our business. It helps our customers monitor employee spending, book travel with preferred vendors, and negotiate corporate purchasing agreements that can save them millions of dollars per year.”

Ready for Takeoff

Prior to 1996, Travel and Transport ran most reports manually and distributed the results via fax and mail. In 1996, senior officers at the company decided to update their reporting systems. “We wanted to create an online system that would allow clients to access information directly, so they would not have to rely on our IT department to run reports for them,” says Kubasik. “Our customers need tools to monitor corporate travel expenditures throughout their companies. With access to the right data, they can make sure they are getting the best pricing from airlines, hotels, car rental companies, and other vendors.”

Kubasik oversees the company’s IT infrastructure and manages about 50 IT professionals. His staff began by evaluating packaged travel management applications such as HiMark and PRISM, but they felt they were not flexible enough to supply a complete range of capabilities their customers were looking for in a product. They went on to evaluate BI products from several leading vendors, including Information Builders, Oracle, Crystal Reports, and Informix.

“We needed more than just pretty reports,” Kubasik recalls. “We wanted to build a reporting environment that was powerful enough to handle transaction-intensive operations, yet simple enough to deploy over the Web. Having an efficient architecture was important, since we knew we would have hundreds of concurrent users. That’s what made Information Builders’ WebFOCUS stand out.”

Training and Development

Travel and Transport began developing eTTek Review using Desktop FOCUS, then moved the application to WebFOCUS once the latter became available. Since then, six developers have become experienced with WebFOCUS. Most of them attended training classes hosted by Information Builders, and some of them attended the annual Information Builders Summit User Conference.

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“Our developers have clearly benefited from the training, seminars, and user group meetings,” says Kubasik. “The classes acquaint us with new features of the WebFOCUS technology, as well as with how to effectively deploy these new features in our system. For example, at a recent seminar, our developers learned about a new graphical user interface, which bolstered their understanding of the visual development techniques and graphics available to WebFOCUS developers.”

Information Builders’ Consulting supplied valuable expertise throughout the development cycle, particularly during the final stages, when developers were testing the application to increase performance.

Launching the Environment

Today, customer service personnel as well as customers use eTTek Review to create forecasts for the coming year and to target specific areas of business travel expenditures. These users can choose from more than 700 management reports, including:

- Travel summary
- Airline compliance
- Hotel analysis
- Car analysis

Travel managers at about 300 corporations use the reports to analyze corporate travel spending on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. About 50,000 reports are currently set up in eTTek Review – everything from noncompliance reports that reveal why an employee did not obtain the lowest airfare for a particular flight, to executive overviews that summarize spending patterns. Most reports are parameter driven.

“For many of our customers, WebFOCUS reports get passed all the way up to the board of directors,” explains Kubasik. “Everyone from line-of-business managers to senior executives value this information. Customers regularly log into the system via the Web to run their own reports. It only takes about 20 minutes to learn how to use the system.”

Reports can be run interactively or in batch mode, with results displayed on the screen, stored in a library, or sent to an FTP server at the user’s site. “Most summary reports have drill-down capability to a detailed report,” explains Steven Cords, team leader for the eTTek Review project. “These drill-down links are dynamically built based on the BY statements of the particular report. All reports can be run for a particular hierarchy structure, and more than one hierarchy can be selected.”

Users nationwide tap into eTTek Review to run an estimated 10,000 reports per month. The underlying information architecture makes it easy for users at all levels to obtain the information they need. Travel information is captured in a proprietary application called the Global Distribution System (GDS), which resides in a relational database on a powerful IBM AS/400 computer. SQL tables are used to store user IDs and passwords, and FOCUS databases are used for everything else (company databases, lookup databases, report parameter databases, etc.).

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**.

"The database can be sorted according to a specific hierarchy to match the breakdown of reports required by each company," continues Cords. "If they want to see just marketing and accounting information, we can deliver it. If they want to see the particular level of detail reflecting a given cost center, we can deliver that, too."

Because all data is securely stored for three years, trend reports can be generated to compare current travel to previous years. The system can also be used to monitor where employees are traveling at any point in time. Data is available in PDF and Excel formats.

"Our Web-based reports are comprehensive management tools that maintain security, safety, policy compliance, and cost efficiency within a company," explains Kubasik. "To increase ease of use, every report can be quickly transferred into Excel. This saves time and money and provides a high level of customer satisfaction."

Kubasik says he has been pleased with the services provided by Information Builders. "You can have the best technology in the world, but if you don't have the service to back it up you will have a hard time delivering the results customers expect. With Information Builders, we get great technology and prompt, thorough follow-up whenever issues arise."

Information Builders' reputation and prominence notoriety have helped Travel and Transport sell eTTek Review to customers. "Most of the Fortune 100 companies are Information Builders' clients," Kubasik points out. "That's a great calling card as we promote the technology to our own customer base."