

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.

Time Inc.

Snapshot

Organization

Time Inc., a division of Time Warner and the world's leading magazine company.

The Challenge

Reduce the turnaround time for obtaining advertising reports from 24 hours to a few minutes. Deliver more thorough information to sales reps, allowing analysts to concentrate on strategic projects.

The Strategy

Create a self-service application that instantly delivers custom and standard advertising reports to authorized users on demand.

The Results

A more efficient marketing organization, better informed sales staff, and better service to clients.

Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS, Consulting.



Paul Geiger, associate director of marketing, advertising, and research systems, Time Inc.

Time Delivers Instant Advertising Information

Real-Time Information Delivery Improves Efficiency and Customer Service

Imagine you are an advertising sales rep for a major print magazine. You have been trying to get an appointment with a prospective client for a long time. One day the client phones you suddenly to say he can squeeze you in right after lunch to discuss a new campaign. You contact your marketing department for a quick rundown on the client's advertising history, only to learn that it will take at least 24 hours to obtain the reports you need to make an intelligent, informed pitch for the business. Oh well, you'll just have to wing it.

For Time Inc., a division of Time Warner and the world's leading magazine company, that strategy simply isn't good enough. Time's Corporate Marketing Information (CMI) division, which is in charge of all advertising analysis for the company, recently developed a self-service application called CMI Interactive. Built using Information Builders' WebFOCUS, the new system enables sales reps to instantly create custom

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or standard advertising reports about Time publications, its competitors' publications, and the companies that advertise in those publications.

“WebFOCUS streamlines our core business process,” says Paul Geiger, associate director of marketing, advertising, and research systems for Time Inc. “Thanks to the new reporting system, our salespeople are better informed about the magazines they work for and the context into which they fit. My analysts can spend more time concentrating on trending and strategy, and less on answering requests for individual reports.

According to Geiger, because the self-service reporting system is so fast and easy to use, users are requesting more reports than before – and getting smarter as a result. “In the past we generated about 2,000 reports per month,” he adds. “That has grown to 11,000 reports per month on the WebFOCUS system.”

Turning a Page

With headquarters in the Time & Life Building in New York City, Time's heritage dates back to Time magazine's founding in 1923. The company has grown continually over the years, resulting in an increasing volume of requests for accurate information about advertising, competitors, and sales. Today, Time publishes 140 regular-frequency titles to 300 million readers, accounting for nearly a quarter of the total advertising revenue of all U.S. consumer magazines. Its top titles include *People*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Time*, which were recently ranked first, second, and third in ad revenue among U.S. consumer magazines.

Time Inc.'s CMI department subscribes to data sources that track ads placed in almost every major consumer publication, helping the organization stay abreast of what is going on in the advertising world. It gets raw data from outside sources, including Competitive Media Reporting, a provider of marketing communication information and advertising expenditure data. Recently it became clear that it was time to change the way requests for advertising reports were handled.

“Our old reporting system required mainframe programming to extract information,” says Geiger. “System analysts generated reports and faxed them to users, who often reentered the data into spreadsheets to do their own analysis.”

Geiger and his colleagues wanted to develop a self-service reporting system that would enable reps to obtain advertising information on their own – without intervention from programmers. “As we started to use browser-based applications on our intranet, it became clear that the right kind of reporting environment could make competitive media information instantly available through Web browsers – to anyone who needed it,” he explains.

Solid Reporting

Time didn't have to look far for a Web-based reporting tool to fit their needs. “We already used Information Builders' reporting technology,” recalls Geiger, “and we were inclined to stay with a vendor that had proven itself. WebFOCUS had the features we wanted, and it builds on a mature technology base for application development, data access, and presentation. It was the logical choice for our needs.”

“We simply directed users to the self-service Web site to get the new advertising information from our database. It is obvious that we are improving the efficiency of our department.”

Time used WebFOCUS to create an efficient architecture for delivering real-time information on demand. With a boost from Information Builders Consulting at the outset of the project, the development process took approximately five months to complete.

Step one involved moving data from mainframe systems to an Oracle client/server database designed for ad hoc reporting. Because WebFOCUS supports native access to the Oracle database, developers did not need to write special code to extract the data.

WebFOCUS and the Oracle databases are installed on dual-Pentium servers running Microsoft Windows 2000 operating system. The Oracle tables are updated monthly from outside sources, including Competitive Media Reporting.

Step two involved building new reporting applications for the Web. Information Builders helped Time's in-house developers organize information into a customized user interface, which requires only a browser for access. WebFOCUS features an advanced point-and-click development environment that made it easy to construct a managed reporting system. "It couldn't have gone more smoothly," says Geiger.

Information Delivery

Time's new reporting system, dubbed CMI Interactive, makes it easy for advertising department personnel to readily create reports via a simple Web-based interface. Thanks to its true thin-client orientation, authorized users simply need a standard Web browser to access WebFOCUS resources. WebFOCUS retrieves the Oracle data in response to user requests and creates reports to meet a wide variety of requirements. When complex queries are submitted, WebFOCUS only sends the answer set to the requesting user, minimizing network congestion. This server-based architecture reduces network traffic and is easy to scale.

While the old system required advertising personnel to wait up to 24 hours for a report, the new system can turn requests into complete reports in a matter of a few minutes, or even seconds. "Users can instantly retrieve standard reports with a couple of clicks of the mouse," says Geiger. "They can also drill down into the data and create custom reports with relatively little effort."

There are many types of standard reports to choose from. The advertiser report lists all the magazines a specific company is advertising in; the magazine report lists all the companies advertising in a specific magazine; and the category report lists companies that advertise a certain type of product. Within each type of report, users can specify variables to sort and summarize the information. For example, a detail report might compare two specific magazines to each other, while a tear sheet report reveals precisely which pages advertisers are buying.

"These standard reports accommodate a significant volume of all user requests, without any intervention by CMI staff," says Geiger. "Now that users are handling the bulk of their own reporting, our analysts have more time to work on unique or strategic projects."

Everyone from sales assistants to magazine publishers now use the WebFOCUS system.

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.**

Users can view data in their choice of output formats, whether that means a PDF file in Adobe Acrobat format, an e-mail attachment, simple HTML text, or direct input into an Excel spreadsheet. "Our new reporting system has to please a wide variety of users," continues Geiger, "so we have filled it with a lot of examples, directions, and instructions. We also have training sessions every month for those users who want to take their reporting knowledge to the next level."

The Scoop on Value

Time Inc.'s CMI Division believes the new WebFOCUS system is clearly demonstrating its value. For example, when a corporate acquisition added 20 new magazines to the Time roster, Geiger's team was able to handle a huge influx of new work without hiring additional personnel. "We simply directed users to the self-service Web site to get the new advertising information from our database," he says. "It is obvious that we are improving the efficiency of our department."

Armed with real-time access to current advertising information, Time's salespeople can get the reports they need – even on short notice. "Feedback from the field indicates that we are giving clients and prospective clients better information than any of our competitors," concludes Geiger. "We get their business because we can deliver better service and better information. WebFOCUS has been a big win for us."

