

Ahead of the retail pack

Information Builders provided retail giant Arcadia with a solution to drive intelligence and benefits across its empire

The retail industry is ferociously competitive with loyalty far from guaranteed. Now retailers are looking for a competitive edge. The ability to access and analyse accurate, consistent and timely information is critical.

Arcadia recognised this need and in the late Nineties embarked on a data warehouse project with IBM to centralise information for its international, group finance and branch merchandising teams. By 2005, the company had created a data warehouse for its central operations which was supplemented by a business intelligence tool to provide reports to around 200 users.

However, Arcadia recognised it needed to extend the solution across the enterprise to include buyers and merchandising teams of the eight trading brands. These teams were using legacy applications which had become inflexible and restrictive.

Driving business intelligence across the enterprise

The retailer wanted to extend its business intelligence solution from its current user base to nearly 1,000. However, it also knew it would look to roll-out the solution to all branch stores, resulting in a solution that would be accessible to over 5,000 users.

Arcadia undertook a detailed review of the incumbent Microstrategy solution as well as those from other business intelligence vendors, including Information Builders, selecting the latter's WebFocus application because of its strong architecture, scalability, ease of deployment and cost effectiveness.

David Hale, supply chain controller at Arcadia Group, says: "By selecting WebFocus, we have an operational business intelligence solution that will drive information into the hands of users and therefore help shape and drive the business forward."

Driving benefits across the business

With its previous business intelligence system, the company had created over 1,000 system and end user-built reports. This was becoming overly complex and after a review of all reports, it used WebFocus to rationalise the number of reports down to 100 that covered all business requirements.



Arcadia recognised the need to access and analyse consumer data in the late Nineties

In addition, end-users could create their own reports based on parameters set by the IT team. A key part of the training was getting staff to rebuild their previous Microstrategy-based reports in WebFocus.

"The intuitive nature of WebFocus meant we could train the staff on its functionality – and at the same time get them to build reports for their job. One of the biggest barriers we wanted to overcome was user adoption and by taking a training-based approach, we have 100 per cent user support of the WebFocus tool," says Hale.

Staff can now deliver reports in a timely manner. This solution has enabled users to analyse information to make informed decisions whether finance, marketing, purchasing, or merchandise oriented.

One example of how WebFocus has benefited Arcadia is through improved basket analysis. The group is now able to analyse how shop window displays drive additional sales of clothes within ranges and what are the best combination of clothing within stores. "Prior to WebFocus, we had to work on experience and basic tools to make decisions. Now we can analyse the data quickly, change displays overnight and therefore be more dynamic to the needs of our customers," explains Hale.

The future

One of the key reasons for selecting Information Builders was the scalability and, according to Hale, Arcadia will seek to roll out WebFocus across all its UK stores so staff in the field can make changes in store to drive more sales out of every branch.

The company also plans to redevelop its legacy management information using the IBM DB2 Enterprise data warehouse and WebFocus, helping to consolidate the delivery and access of information for all staff onto a single, easy to use system.

"WebFocus is transforming the way we access and deliver information across the organisation. We are empowering users with timely, accurate and consistent information so as to help every employee make faster and better decisions. By doing so, we are ensuring every user's contribution can have a positive influence on the business," concludes Hale.