

Information Builders enables agile information solutions with business intelligence (BI) and integration technologies. Flexible, scalable, and secure, WebFOCUS – the most widely utilized BI platform – permeates every level of the extended enterprise through a simple and intuitive user experience.

### LaBarge

#### Snapshot

##### Organization

LaBarge ([www.labarge.com](http://www.labarge.com)), an electronics manufacturing firm serving a wide range of market sectors, including defense, aerospace, homeland security, industrial products, and natural resources.

##### The Challenge

Update a twenty-year-old MRP system to make data available to hundreds of employees working in finance, purchasing, customer service, human resources, and sales.

##### The Strategy

Deploy a Web-based business intelligence environment with direct access to ERP data, enabling users in multiple departments to access the information they need.

##### The Results

An organization-wide reporting system capable of handling custom requests from accounts payable, accounts receivable, HR, sales, and other departments.

##### Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS, Professional Services.



## Boosting Insight and Automation at LaBarge

### WebFOCUS Anchors Pervasive BI Infrastructure for Global Electronics Manufacturer

As a recognized leader in the manufacturing sector, LaBarge provides high-performance electronics and electromechanical equipment to companies in multiple industries, from defense, aerospace, and homeland security to industrial products and natural resources. LaBarge's finely crafted electronic components are used in military aircraft, radar systems, satellite launch vehicles, airport security equipment, glass container fabrication systems, and many other applications.

It's a precision business – and LaBarge applies the same rigorous standards to its information systems as it does to its manufacturing capabilities. That's why corporate officers selected WebFOCUS from Information Builders as their business intelligence (BI) standard for reporting, data analysis and information delivery.

"Information Builders approached the venture as a collaborative effort, and I knew that we could continue to use their services five, ten, and even fifteen years down the line," says George Hayward, director of Information Systems at LaBarge.

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Establishing WebFOCUS as a corporate standard has laid a foundation for delivering real-time information to knowledge workers throughout the enterprise. According to Hayward, WebFOCUS addresses the needs of many types of users, supplying everything from complex analysis tools to standard drill-down reporting – all accessible through a simple and intuitive browser interface.

### **A Prudent Upgrade**

For LaBarge, adopting WebFOCUS was not a luxury. It was necessary to maintain its competitive stance as a world leader in the contract manufacturing sector. For twenty years, the company has relied on custom enterprise resource planning (ERP) and manufacturing resource planning (MRP) applications that store information in VSAM databases. While these legacy applications have their own embedded reporting capabilities, as LaBarge gradually moved more aspects of its business online, these reporting tools become too rigid for the company's dynamic growth.

“Our old reporting systems met most of our needs but they were not particularly flexible,” admits Hayward. “We couldn't get much information out of them, other than the data that had been previously logged in canned reports.”

Hayward and his team spent some time developing custom reports to mine data from these legacy information systems, but ultimately they decided to purchase a modern business intelligence environment to bolster their reporting, analysis, and data access capabilities. They evaluated a variety of Web-based reporting tools before selecting WebFOCUS. They were mainly attracted to its mature ad hoc reporting technology. They were also impressed with Information Builders' reputation for quality service and longevity in the software industry.

“Information Builders doesn't just sell BI software; they also have a fair-sized consulting practice, and I felt confident that this combination would be an ideal fit for our needs,” Hayward notes. “They have the staff and the expertise to help us get what we need out of the software.”

### **Ramping Up Report Production**

LaBarge enlisted help from Information Builders Professional Services to get started with the new BI software. They installed WebFOCUS on a pair of Dell servers running Microsoft Windows 2003, then went on to create an organization-wide reporting system capable of handling custom requests from accounts payable, accounts receivable, HR, sales, and other departments.

Today, WebFOCUS enables users throughout the company to request reports through a parameter-driven reporting environment. Hayward describes WebFOCUS as “the key that unlocks LaBarge's mainframe data,” giving authorized users easy access to information that was formerly difficult to retrieve. From purchasing to customer service, contracts, and accounting, there are currently 350 WebFOCUS users, with many more coming on board every day. Thanks to its comprehensive set of native database connections, operational data is easily accessed in its current location and format. These users simply need a Web browser to obtain and share mainframe information – no plug-ins or additional software is necessary.

“From a personnel standpoint, having a standard software platform enables us to leverage investments in common tools and skill sets,” says Hayward. “From an architectural standpoint, adhering to a BI standard helps us reduce data redundancy and reuse business logic.”

## 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 [www.informationbuilders.com](http://www.informationbuilders.com), or in the U.S. and Canada, call **(800) 969-4636**.

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Thanks to embedded parameters and data drill-down capabilities – which are native to the WebFOCUS environment – most of LaBarge's standard reports give users ten to fifteen different ways to filter data. This allows users to quickly find specific information, as well as to export data to Microsoft Excel for additional analysis. "WebFOCUS has made data more accessible to more kinds of people," Hayward says. "The software turns everyone into a decision-maker."

Hayward understands an essential truth about BI deployments: the more consumers of information a company has, the greater the return on its BI investments. He envisions extending the reporting technology into the production side of the business to help reduce inventory costs, ensure more efficient assembly operations, manage product-quality issues, and lower the overall cost of sales. Having a cohesive BI architecture will make it easier to manage supply chain operations and keep inventory costs at a minimum, while ensuring that enough stock is on hand to fulfill customer orders. Additionally, having superior information will enable the company to accurately assess supplier performance, increase procurement efficiency, and build more strategic B2B relationships.

### Calculating ROI

LaBarge's new BI infrastructure is paying off in several ways – primarily by making employees throughout the company more productive. Hayward has calculated a tenfold increase in developer productivity, mainly because it is so much easier to develop new reports, and also because the reports run so much more quickly. Additional savings will come from consolidating the company's IT infrastructure around one standard report writer, which has the corollary effect of increasing availability, lowering maintenance costs, and eliminating the need to support extra hardware and software.

"Consolidating our reporting systems onto a shared, standardized reporting infrastructure eliminates costs related to maintaining multiple systems and disparate platforms," says Hayward. "By creating new reports in WebFOCUS, we can deliver a higher quality of service for less cost."

While ROI is an essential metric for calculating the success of any business intelligence project, LaBarge pays close attention to non-financial issues as well, such as easier access to information, better dissemination of knowledge, and minimal time spent training end users. With WebFOCUS, authorized users can access the data they choose, and qualify the results according to a flexible set of selection criteria. Hayward says creating reports with WebFOCUS is as easy as ordering books from Amazon.com. By allowing hundreds of users to access reports and information – without the assistance of programmers or analysts – LaBarge is spreading business intelligence capabilities throughout its entire enterprise.

"WebFOCUS has made enterprise reporting substantially faster and easier across the board," Hayward sums up. He lauds Information Builders for its commitment to helping LaBarge launch WebFOCUS throughout his rapidly expanding organization. "Information Builders has continued to provide superior service as their technology has changed and advanced," he concludes. "They succeed partly because of their intensive focus on one type of technology: good, third-party report-generation across a variety of platforms. On top of that, they seem to genuinely have our best interest at heart."

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