

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.

### Lafarge Aso Cement Co., Ltd.

#### Snapshot

##### Organization

Lafarge Aso Cement Co, Ltd. is a leading provider of cement to the construction industry.

##### The Challenge

Improve data accessibility for field staff members who needed better information to perform their jobs.

##### The Strategy

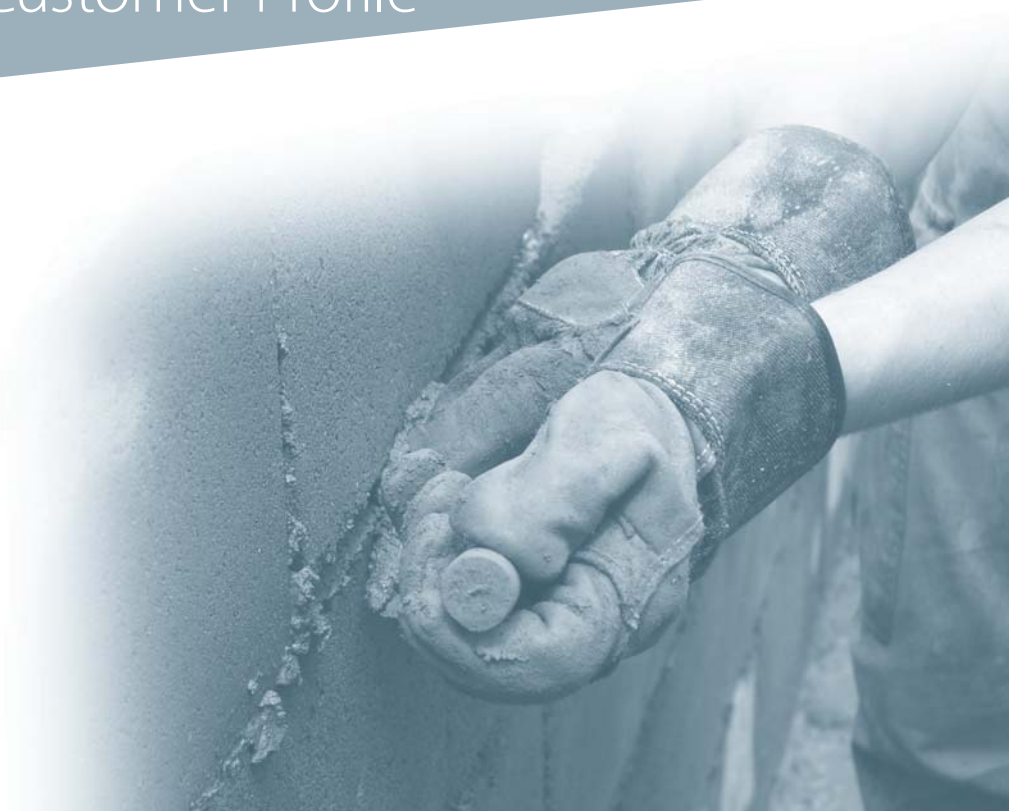
Implement a new reporting and analysis infrastructure in conjunction with deployment of new enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems.

##### The Results

Increased reporting efficiency has led to enhanced operations and more flexible business management strategies.

##### Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS.



## Lafarge Aso Cement Uses WebFOCUS to Solidify Data-Access Processes

### Brings Better Information to Field Staff Members With New ERP and Analysis Infrastructure

Lafarge Aso Cement Co., Ltd. was established in 2001 as a joint venture between the cement division of Aso Corporation – a company with more than 140 years of experience serving western Japan – and Lafarge – a world leader in the construction industry with branches across 76 countries. Within three years, the company achieved the top operating profit ratio in its industry, due in part to its environmentally friendly production and quality-control systems. Even before joining forces with Lafarge, Aso had been using recycled resources, and was compliant with ISO9001 and ISO14001 standards.

When the company standardized its business models and processes after the merger, it introduced a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) package. As the ERP environment was being deployed, concerns about the inability of field staff to retrieve information came to light. Job performance was being hindered by poor access to data.

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Lafarge began evaluating business intelligence (BI) systems to provide comprehensive reporting capabilities to users. The company strongly believed that improving the reporting efficiency of field staff was the key to achieving growth.

### **Data Requirements Increase As Operation Systems Are Downsized**

At the end of the 20th century, downsizing became a prominent trend among corporate IT departments. Ten years ago, Aso introduced a client/server-based sales management system, and planned to develop a reporting and analysis system to complement it. The company's information systems group also built a sales data reference (SDR) system. The company introduced an ERP accounting package and developed a financial data reference (FDR) application. At the same time, the need to refer to and utilize data during the course of routine business activities was growing quickly.

Lafarge decided to standardize its worldwide business processes and modify the ERP environment, which would serve as the main operational system. This proved to be a challenge, however, as SDR, FDR, and other peripheral systems were transferred to the ERP environment. The ERP restructuring alone would require tremendous effort, and the company lacked the needed resources to develop related reporting systems from scratch. So, they began to investigate packaged BI solutions.

“We already had an enterprise application integration (EAI) tool in place to make data compatible with the ERP package,” says Ryosuke Hayashida, Information System group manager in Aso Lafarge's Financial Control Department. “In addition, we knew that Oracle's materialized view was effective as a base technology for accessing data for reference purposes. Therefore, we wanted to employ a cost-effective, high-performance reporting tool.”

Lafarge chose WebFOCUS – offered by Information Builders' Japanese representative K.K. Ashisuto – because it offered high productivity and rapid report development, as well as a user-friendly interface. More importantly, Lafarge believed in Information Builders' concept of operational business intelligence because it was field staff members who had the most urgent data-access needs. Now, the company has an advanced, fully integrated data-utilization infrastructure, which is admired by Lafarge member companies. Staff can easily leverage corporate data to make fast, effective decisions and take swift action when needed.

WebFOCUS was selected based on the following criteria:

- Simplicity in both report development and user operability
- Timely analysis to enable the implementation of flexible business strategies
- The introduction of Active Reports to facilitate analyses in offline environments

What Lafarge appreciated most about WebFOCUS was its high productivity in report creation. WebFOCUS provides an excellent GUI development environment, which would enable them to quickly and easily meet user information demands.

WebFOCUS also came highly recommended by Ashisuto. Lafarge had complete trust in its partner's opinions of the powerful BI platform.

**“Using WebFOCUS, we can analyze various key performance indicators in a timely manner, to grasp management situations. This helps us foster flexible planning and execution of key management strategies.”**

### **Simplicity in Report Development and Operation**

At first, Hayashida thought of WebFOCUS as a tool for simply creating ledger sheets. However, when he saw the demonstration, he realized it would serve as an excellent infrastructure for data analysis.

He was most impressed by WebFOCUS' rapid report development capabilities. For example, it does not require the use of SQL scripts for data extraction. He believed that with WebFOCUS, Lafarge could implement an environment that would make data easily accessible to its field staff.

Operational staff is enjoying the intuitive data-manipulation features. They can simply search conditions and click “Run” to analyze data in a variety of ways.

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### **Timely Analyses and Flexible Business Management Strategies**

In December 2005, Lafarge introduced WebFOCUS as a part of the ERP rollout initiative. Once development started, things went very smoothly. It took about two hours to create simple reports, and just two weeks – including discussions with field staff – to build very complicated reports. As a result, an integration structure for data utilization, called the Lafarge Aso Cement Data Reference System (LDR), was completed without problems in September 2006.

Data was initially used by the sales and finance departments, but the system was quickly expanded to the logistics, purchasing, inventory, and quality assurance departments. Sixty-three reports were provided to approximately 50 field staff members, who needed the information to better control operations. Additionally, integration of the core operating system, which was achieved through the use of the ERP package, made it possible to develop more sophisticated reports that unify data from various departments.

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### **Active Reports and Resource Analyzer Improve Data Analysis**

In June 2008, the company introduced a comprehensive reporting environment built on WebFOCUS that included WebFOCUS Active Reports. WebFOCUS Active Reports enables advanced data analysis in an offline environment.

“The most important thing for us was to have widespread user adoption of the LDR environment,” says Hayashida. “One effective way to ensure that our staff uses the system is to continuously release new functions. We introduced WebFOCUS for this very reason, because it will allow us to offer our staff a variety of powerful new functions in the future.”

## 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.**

### Results of WebFOCUS Adoption

WebFOCUS proved its value in terms of enabling fast, efficient report creation. Currently, WebFOCUS is used by the sales and financial departments, as well as distribution, inventory management, and quality control groups. Through timely analysis of various key performance indicators (KPIs) that provide insight into the status of critical management situations, Lafarge has been able to develop and implement more flexible business strategies.

