

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.

SMBC Finance Service

Snapshot

Organization

SMBC Finance Service Co., Ltd. is the comprehensive financial services division of Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group.

The Challenge

Make timely and accurate data available to users in a secure, efficient, and easy to operate environment.

The Strategy

Deploy a comprehensive Web reporting environment to work in tandem with a new salesforce automation (SFA) system.

The Results

Increased sales collaboration and efficiency, and provided the ability to make better and timelier business decisions based on accurate and up-to-date information.

Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS.

Business Intelligence Helps SMBC Adapt to Dynamic Market

WebFOCUS and Salesforce Automation System Enable Quicker, More Accurate Management Reporting

Part of the Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group, SMBC Finance Service Co., Ltd. is a comprehensive financial firm born of the merger between SMBC Finance, Mitsui Finance Service, and Sakura Finance Service. The organization offers various settlement and accounts receivable services, such as account transfers and credit card payment processing, financing for condominiums and other housing projects, and factoring and credit services to certify trade payments for corporations. For several years, the company has been building a salesforce automation (SFA) system to help its sales representatives more effectively compete in an increasingly aggressive market.

WebFOCUS was selected to provide the reporting infrastructure for this new environment. There were many reasons behind SMBC's decision, but most importantly, sales staff already had experience using FOCUS in a mainframe environment. WebFOCUS capitalized on this and offered superior usability and productivity, as well as the security needed to facilitate effective risk management.

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Strengthening the Salesforce Amid Tough Competition

SMBC operates in an industry that is changing drastically. Until recently, products and services similar to those offered by the company were sold in person. But, the expansion of non-store retailing – such as mail-order and online shopping – as well as changes to cash settlement processes have forced companies to shift their business models. For example, remittance, postal transfers, payments via convenience stores, and credit cards have all become popular payment methods. SMBC realized that in order to stay ahead, it would need to adapt to this dynamic market. However, this required insight into the changing needs of its customers.

Additionally, competition was intensifying due to the IT revolution. Companies from other industries now had the tools at their disposal to compete with the large financial services firms. Therefore, SMBC also needed to improve the speed and precision of its management processes.

The first proactive step the company took was the introduction of a new SFA application. Sales representatives use the system to store detailed information about deals and negotiations in progress, and to gather feedback and advice from co-workers and supervisors about prospective clients. Daily sales activity reports can be entered into the system and shared with others across the company.

The system has provided many benefits. Sales staff morale has improved because representatives feel as though everyone is supporting their efforts. Supervisors have the opportunity to share advice and expertise in a way that positively impacts the outcome of sales activities. Senior managers, who were previously unable to track sales activities, can now get a high-level view of opportunities as they are being worked.

Users were able to review a variety of reports from the data contained within the SFA system, including transaction details, transaction volume, and earnings. Reports were distributed on a monthly basis – in CSV format for line-of-business workers and mid-level managers, and in Microsoft Access and Excel formats for directors. However, this process was very time-consuming, often requiring more than eight business days of labor before data was available in the required format. As a result, the data used at monthly meetings was extremely outdated – often more than two months old – because there was not enough time to process and present more current information. This impacted the company’s ability to quickly make changes to emerging business conditions because they could only analyze historical information.

Six years ago, SMBC moved from a mainframe-based infrastructure to an open computing environment to improve the quality of its data. At the same time, the company deployed the SFA system, with WebFOCUS as the front end for reporting and analysis. Some data can now be seen in real time, while other information is available on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, depending on the type.

“We were very familiar with WebFOCUS because we had been using FOCUS for quite a while,” explains Takeshi Fujita, vice manager of SMBC’s System Department. “We knew it was reliable and easy to manipulate.”

Since its introduction, WebFOCUS has been delivering the desired results. It offers optimum usability for end users by making both pre-developed and ad hoc reports readily available via the company's Intranet. Additionally, users can export report data to a variety of formats such as Excel spreadsheets, making it easier for them to browse information.

WebFOCUS has also greatly improved productivity in terms of report development. Novice as well as experienced engineers in the company's System Department can easily develop reports using an intuitive GUI wizard. More seasoned engineers can generate reports by directly scripting SQL into WebFOCUS procedures. This not only boosts efficiency, which is critical for addressing requests as soon as they emerge, it provides engineers with tremendous flexibility so they can more effectively meet specific end-user needs.

The company was also impressed with WebFOCUS security, which is an important feature for financial institutions. Working in conjunction with Active Directory, WebFOCUS provides access and control based on each user's role and function. An audit log ensures employees are always accessing the right data.

Serving the Daily Information Needs of More Than 300 Sales Staff

There are currently 330 people at SMBC who rely on WebFOCUS for reporting purposes. Users can leverage 10 different types of fixed reports, as well as more than 60 other customizable reports about trades, volumes, revenue, and other important factors that can be generated and displayed on demand.

When needed for meetings, reports can be saved in ledger format and printed. This initially presented a problem, since any changes to the underlying data source would require manual adjustments to the ledger sheets. To solve this problem, the Systems Department introduced Fujitsu List Creator, which extends WebFOCUS with spreadsheet capabilities. HTML-based data generated in WebFOCUS is shared with List Creator, which then enables output of high-quality paper-based spreadsheets. As a result, the number of man-hours required to maintain hard-copy legends as information changes has been dramatically reduced.

Timely Data Leads to Improved Agility

Over the past six years, the effects of WebFOCUS have been extremely positive for SMBC. Board meetings can now be held more promptly because data is available faster. Additionally, because information is far more current, problem solving is expedited and countermeasures can be immediately taken when critical business issues arise.

The new reporting environment also offers a simple data search capability, which is used in various ways. For example, many pieces of mail delivered to SMBC do not have the exact names of the intended recipient. Previously, the General Affairs Department would have to send e-mails to all employees, asking if they were expecting such mail – an approach resulting in a very high number of delivery failures. With WebFOCUS, they can locate the names of the appropriate recipients by entering the name of the sending organization.

Find Out More

To find out how our solutions can help your company succeed, talk to an Information Builders representative today.

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or in the U.S. and Canada,

call **(800) 969-4636.**

As employees were using WebFOCUS, a new problem related to data personalization emerged. End users would obtain data through WebFOCUS, output the reports in Excel format, and then save the spreadsheets to their local computers – where they would perform further customization and modification. Although these reports were initially generated using the same data, the results they portrayed were all slightly different. Additionally, other employees would then use reports created by others instead of generating their own reports through the WebFOCUS system.

To solve this problem, SMBC introduced DataSpider Servista from Appresso Inc. This data-linkage platform enables the return of user-processed Excel data back to the underlying database, enabling accurate information sharing across all the company's divisions.

"This product, as well as List Creator, were sold to us and are supported by Ashisuto, who helped ensure that everything cooperated fully with WebFOCUS," Fujita says. "This raised our confidence level when introducing these new solutions."

"Over the past several years we have emphasized the use of our network and databases, so that the company can cope with even the smallest changes," said Makoto Uchida, SMBC's executive managing director. "The SFA system and WebFOCUS support that goal, serving as essential technology tools for our salesforce. Everyone now uses information directly from the SFA system, and users are diligent about incorporating their own modifications back into the application. This has dramatically accelerated our most important operations."

