

Customer Profile

Information Builders enables agile information solutions with the WebFOCUS business intelligence (BI) platform and integration technologies from iWay Software.

Spicer Gelenkwellenbau

Snapshot

Organization

Headquartered in Essen, Germany, Spicer Gelenkwellenbau is a leading manufacturer of propeller shafts for global automotive and machine industries.

The Challenge

Enable managers to stay on top of parts production, ordering, and delivery to customers in a fast-moving, dynamic market.

The Strategy

Simplify access to relevant, timely information from a variety of data sources via a Web-based reporting system and an integrated data warehouse.

The Results

Real-time monitoring and evaluation of business processes facilitates just-in-time inventory management, improves customer satisfaction, and provides greater competitive advantage.

Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS and iWay Software.



Business Intelligence and Integration Propel Auto Manufacturer

Spicer Gelenkwellenbau Drives Efficiency and Customer Satisfaction With WebFOCUS and iWay

The aftermarket in the machine and automotive industry is fiercely competitive. To win business and keep customers, automotive suppliers and their entire value-added chain must be extremely flexible. Because manufacturers increasingly want just-in-time deliveries from their suppliers to keep expensive warehousing – and dead stock – to a minimum, suppliers find themselves asking the same questions: How soon can I deliver the required quantity? What's the status of current purchase orders? What does it take to raise production over the short or long term? To answer these questions – and make the right business decisions – suppliers need access to the right information at all times.

Spicer Gelenkwellenbau GmbH (GWB) fabricates for the machine and automotive industries propeller shafts commonly used to keep commercial trucks and buses rolling. The company has a fairly clear-cut product portfolio, yet nonetheless must

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battle with complex production and supply conditions. Spicer's customers often order at short notice and will specify a particular quota of propeller shafts for partial consignment. For managers to make quick business-saving decisions, it is vital for Spicer to be flexible and up-to-date with all stages of production and capacity utilization.

That's why Spicer selected WebFOCUS business intelligence and iWay enterprise integration software from Information Builders. This powerful combination of technologies provides Spicer with a real-time overview of their entire manufacturing ecosystem, which helps to detect bottlenecks before they can affect production and, most importantly, keeps customers supplied on time.

A Reporting Evolution

Spicer chose Information Builders' FOCUS as the basis for constructing a data warehouse called MADAB (Management Database), which became the foundation for a new reporting system. Data from production planning, financial accounting, purchasing, and inventory management must be loaded into the data warehouse. Since this data is kept in different databases at Spicer, data access could have been a big, complex issue. But because Spicer took advantage of enterprise integration solutions from iWay Software, a subsidiary of Information Builders, data access was a breeze.

Equipped with 280 adapters for a multitude of data sources, iWay is able to access and integrate all data, regardless of location or format. iWay's fully automated extract, transform, and load (ETL) tools simplify the creation, maintenance, and expansion of the data warehouse. Using an intuitive, easy-to-use interface, system administrators can quickly create end-to-end ETL processes involving heterogeneous data structures across disparate computing platforms.

In the mid-1990s, the green-screen FOCUS solution was replaced by the client/server version of FOCUS Six. Around the same time, cost-center accounting at Spicer was integrated into MADAB and made available to controlling and cost-center experts as a self-service application. Spicer soon decided to upgrade to Information Builders' Web-based reporting solution, WebFOCUS, which promised cost-efficiency, easier maintenance, and improved performance.

There were other advantages to be had, too. Installation was not necessary for the clients and reports could be maintained and accessed from outside of the company by sales representatives. As an added bonus, WebFOCUS ReportCaster could be used to send exception reports or distribute standard reports at regular intervals to a select group of users.

WINSTON Is Watching

Using WebFOCUS, Spicer developed its own system for automated process monitoring. Inspired by the novel *1984* by George Orwell, developers at Spicer named the system WINSTON after the novel's main character, a government employee who is under constant surveillance. The WINSTON at Spicer doesn't watch over employees, however, but closely monitors production processes, interdepartmental procedures, and all operating systems. It enables employees to identify problems before they ever have a chance to enter into production.

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.

"It's becoming more and more important for us to be able to evaluate our business developments in real time. WebFOCUS puts all crucial processes in view with just a click of the mouse."

WINSTON uses WebFOCUS to analyze all relevant data and to automatically send reports via e-mail, SMS, and FTP. The system alerts staff to critical situations and keeps them up-to-date through status reports, and, needless to say, manual checkups are now a thing of the past. These features help Spicer to efficiently monitor its production processes.

Of particular importance to Spicer is the automatic monitoring of those functions crucial to contracts for just-in-time delivery. Delivery cancellations or delays cost the customers money – and in extreme cases can cost Spicer customers. For this reason, the WINSTON system checks every part request at Spicer via EDI (electronic data interchange). If an order does not arrive within the hour, or the next stage of processing is held up for more than 30 minutes, WINSTON sounds the alarm so the staff can take action.

Extreme Flexibility for Every User

WebFOCUS' intuitive drag-and-drop reporting environment ensures that flexibility always comes first at Spicer. "Users at our company need different things from their reports," says Wolf. "WebFOCUS provides everybody with their preferred report format." For example, WebFOCUS enables users to quickly and easily produce boardroom-quality tables, distribution graphs, Excel spreadsheets, PDF files, three-dimensional visualizations, slices for analyzing single dimensions, and OLAP (online analytical processing) analysis.

As Wolf points out, different employees have different needs, particularly when it comes to the format, content, and timing of their reports. The self-service functions of WebFOCUS mean that reports can be tailored to meet the specific needs of employees. In fact, WebFOCUS offers unlimited options regarding user types and the presentation of the reports, including balanced scorecards, automatically generated and delivered reports, and ad hoc reports. WebFOCUS meets all styles and tastes regardless of whether the receiver is a developer, manager, or sales rep. If a critical threshold is reached somewhere along the production line, the right employee will immediately know about it.

Spicer is more than pleased with their new system. "It's becoming more and more important for us to be able to evaluate our business developments in real time," says Wolf.

Proof that they're on the right track, Spicer was recognized by MAN Nutzfahrzeuge AG, a leading truck and bus manufacturer in Europe, as one of its top suppliers in 2004. The award specifically recognizes strong performance in the areas of quality, engineering, cost, and logistics. "WebFOCUS is the key to this," Wolf says. "It puts all crucial processes in view with just a click of the mouse. And it shouldn't be overlooked that the scalable architecture means the platform can grow with our company."

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