

City of Coquitlam

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City of Coquitlam Customer Success

Located on the West Coast of British Columbia, Canada, Coquitlam is a dynamic city with a commitment to community-based living. Fast becoming the number one location in BC for lifestyle and business, the city's open and accessible government is dedicated to providing services that enable all members of its community—businesses and residents—to prosper and grow within a safe and clean environment. In addition, Coquitlam has invested in a modern infrastructure that continues to pave the way for double-digit residential, commercial, retail, and industrial growth.

With 115,000 residents, the city wanted to streamline its operations and applications to unite the various departments in the city's administration with one reporting tool. The City of Coquitlam initially deployed a business intelligence (BI) solution from Cognos, an IBM company, in 1998 and is presently standardized on Cognos tools. Now, the city can provide its end users with full insight into the data in the numerous applications across separate departments.

Challenges faced

With two major ERP systems from Oracle and PeopleSoft and several smaller, niche government applications, the City of Coquitlam needed a standardized reporting system. The city had to eliminate the individual third-party reporting environments that were linked to the various existing business applications.

Additionally, the city was lacking insight into its data. Users had the ability to run standard reports that were intertwined with the business applications, but needed a solution that could compare and compile information from multiple data sources and conduct proper analysis on the information.

Industry:

- Municipal government

Geography:

- British Columbia, Canada

Information needs:

- Standardized reporting system
- User-friendly tool
- Company-wide access to reports

Functional Area of Deployment:

- Finance
- Human Resources
- Maintenance

Platforms:

- Windows
- Oracle
- Peoplesoft ERP

Users:

- 250

Solutions:

- IBM Cognos BI
- IBM Cognos Planning
- IBM Cognos Metrics Manager
- Cognos Education

Benefits:

- Increased efficiency through standardized reporting
- Easy access to information that is more accurate and timely

“We wanted a tool that would make it easy to push out reports and incorporate a lower development time for each one,” states James Andrusiw, Application Services Manager of Information & Communications Technology

for the City of Coquitlam. “One of the key attributes that we were pushing for and really enjoy now is the self-service reporting capability, which enables users to run and schedule their own reports and install their own prompts without asking the IT department every time they have a request.”

Strategy followed

The City of Coquitlam went live with the Cognos solution in 2000. Since then, Coquitlam has standardized on Cognos for all real-time reporting, data compilation, and analysis, with the reporting environment accessing the integrated data warehouse that runs off the city’s multiple ERP systems. Cognos reports are used to create balanced scorecards for strategic applications such as finance, governance, and compliance.

“Our BI project started with finance, grew into HR and payroll, and then into our Leisure & Parks department. Our parks staff uses Cognos BI to determine attendance at the pools and leisure programs, and conduct analysis on the cost recovery rate of all our facilities,” asserts Andrusiw. “It’s a really neat use of Cognos reporting, because we’re comparing our total costs of running a facility to the amount of money that we’re bringing in for the programs.”

While Coquitlam runs all of its reports with Cognos, it also uses a Cognos planning solution, which works with two different modules within the budgeting cycle—labor planning and fleet maintenance costs.

The Cognos planning software assists the city’s labor planning module by calculating head count, benefit costs, and total labor costs, explains Andrusiw, “because, as a municipal government, a large percentage of our annual operating budget goes to labor.” The fleet management module employs the Cognos solution to calculate the monthly rates for each of the City’s 250 vehicles, ranging from dump trucks to fire engines.

The primary critical success factor that the city is tracking is the expanded user base.

“We want more users to be running their own reports, accessing the information, and using the development tools by themselves. What we’d like to do is move more of the report development out of IT and into the users’ hands,” states Andrusiw.

And Coquitlam is hoping that its upcoming upgrade to IBM Cognos 8 BI will help reach that goal. Throughout the migration, Coquitlam expects to tap the expertise of Cognos Education to prepare end users with report development and administration. During the initial Cognos standardization, the city relied on Cognos Education to help consolidate the skill set within its user base.

Benefits realized

Since standardizing on Cognos, the City of Coquitlam has given its users increased insight into city-wide data, as well as the ability to consolidate information. From an IT perspective, the consolidation of the city’s reporting environment into one standard technology has drastically lowered Coquitlam’s TCO and reduced the number of hours that were previously used to train employees on numerous applications.

“Instead of looking at separate data sources or Excel spreadsheets—documents that don’t integrate well—we can now use the Cognos BI and planning solutions to pull together that data, giving us more insight and control over the information residing in our database,” states Andrusiw. “In turn, this has enabled our management team to make better business decisions.”

In addition, the report development time has dropped significantly. Now, the city can push reports, out in a matter of hours instead of days. And with standardization in one reporting environment, existing reports can be reused by customizing and adjusting them to fit other needs.

“One of the things that users enjoy most about Cognos is having that information at their fingertips. We now have one centralized place to run on-demand reports, which allows users to specify the reports they need without putting in a formal request with IT, also freeing up our IT resources to focus on other areas,” maintains Andrusiw.

Andrusiw sums up his Cognos experience, “The big benefit with Cognos has been one tool, one technology, across the board. The standardization of our BI environment and skill set has been extremely valuable to the city. The Cognos tool has enabled better collaboration on report development, and this has evolved into increased insight and user acceptance.”