

# Compassion International



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*Mazen Haj-Hussein, Senior Project Manager with Compassion International*



With more than 800 employees, Compassion International is one of the world’s largest Christian child-development organizations, working with more than 65 denominations and thousands of indigenous church partners in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Since 1952, Compassion has touched the lives of over one million children and has been recognized for its financial integrity—with top ratings and recommendations by several of the nation’s leading not-for-profit watchdog organizations.

Expecting to double its size within the next three years, Compassion decided to restructure its organization, including its IT infrastructure, so that it could accommodate its planned growth easily. In addition to fine-tuning many of its business processes, the non-profit organization moved from a legacy system to a service-oriented architecture (SOA) to help streamline its donations workflow system. At the same time, Compassion choose to deploy a new operational BI solution to deliver insight into the effectiveness and efficiency of this system. Compassion selected Cognos Now! to enable its employees to track up-to-the-minute key performance indicators (KPIs) using intuitive operational dashboards. Cognos Now! enables Compassion’s employees to spot emerging issues before they become critical, and make more informed and timely decisions that keep the process moving and donations flowing.

## Challenges faced

Compassion has a donations workflow system that channels contributions through a series of steps, processing about 70 percent of all donations automatically. However, about 30 percent of donations end up on an exception path that needs manual intervention, delaying the processing of funds for days. With an expected 10,000 contributions streaming into the system every day through multiple channels, the non-profit organization knew that exceptions were to be expected, but it had no way to gain insight into how it was handling these exceptions.

### Industry:

Non-profit organization

### Geography:

International

### Information Needs

- SOA compliance
- Cost-effective solution
- Ease of deployment
- Scalability
- Flexible architecture
- Consolidation of disparate data
- Self-service capabilities

### Platforms:

- SOA

### Solutions:

Cognos Now!

### Benefits:

- Provided employees with instant access to information needed to monitor and manage business performance at every level
- Provided employees with timely awareness and actionable information for processing performance
- Dramatically reduced exceptions processing time
- Enabled donations to be put to work faster in support of its mission
- Enabled consistent and continuous database updates
- Increased employee productivity and decreased reliance on IT for reporting
- Improved data integrity throughout the organization

In order to gain the timely awareness and actionable information to handle these exceptions, Compassion needed to consolidate its disparate data from multiple systems. “Our main challenge was that our data was all over the place,” explains Mazen Haj-Hussein, Senior Project



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Manager with Compassion International. “We needed a centralized place where all the data was aggregated and employees could instantly gain insight into key metrics.”

### Strategies followed

Compassion was looking for an operational BI solution that was flexible and scalable, and could integrate data seamlessly from multiple sources into customizable dashboards.

Since Compassion is a non-profit organization, the company is always looking for ways to optimize its resources, and needed a solution that would not over-burden its IT department or strain its operating budget. Lastly, Compassion was moving from a legacy system to a service-oriented architecture and required a solution that was SOA-compliant.

After a rigorous evaluation of several operational BI solutions and a successful proof-of-concept, Compassion selected Cognos Now! to deliver insight into key performance metrics. “Cognos Now! had all the functionality we were looking for,” states Haj-Hussein. “Primarily, we were attracted by the solution’s ability to consolidate data from multiple sources and its easily customizable dashboards.”

In December 2006, Compassion deployed Cognos Now! on its new SOA and had it up and running in a couple of days. Currently the organization has deployed the solution to 15 users in its finance and commitments departments, each with its own dashboard and KPIs. Next, Compassion will extend Cognos Now! to its executives. “Our executives are very keen on using Cognos Now! to find out in real time how Compassion is doing overall and if there are any issues with processes,” says Haj-Hussein.

Compassion also plans to extend Cognos Now! throughout the organization eventually, building on the solution’s flexible architecture and its ability to support an unlimited number of users without any additional costs. “With our forecasted growth, Cognos Now! was definitely a cost-effective and strategic decision,” emphasizes Haj-Hussein.

### Benefits realized

With Cognos Now!, Compassion’s key metrics are continuously updated from multiple data sources—including the organization’s contributions database and its business process management (BPM) system—providing personnel with immediate perception of processing performance and proactively alerting them to exceptions. Previously, the non-profit organization had added more staff and tools to manage handling the exceptions. “Instead of solving the

problem, we added more complexity to the system that we had,” explains Haj-Hussein. “With Cognos Now!, we have been able to streamline the entire process. This has helped us greatly.”

With Cognos Now!, Compassion has also gained insight into where incidents are occurring, how quickly they are being handled, and where bottlenecks occur in the system. Further, by tapping the solution’s analysis capabilities, Compassion can determine quickly if they need more or less staff or even additional training to handle requests. The increased insight into the system has dramatically reduced exceptions processing time and allows the organization to put donations to work faster in support of its anti-poverty mission. “Cognos Now! has been very valuable in reducing time spent on the human workflow,” stresses Haj-Hussein.

From day one, Compassion users have embraced Cognos Now! because of its self-service capabilities and user friendliness. In addition, the solution’s customizable dashboards, alerts, and intuitive drill-down menus have been an important incentive in accelerating user adoption. “Users love the flexibility of their Cognos Now! dashboards,” states Haj-Hussein. “They see the information they want, in the way they want to see it.”

Data integration was another key benefit for Compassion. Building on the solution’s interoperability with other systems and support for an unlimited amount of data sources, the organization has been able to consolidate its disparate data. As a result, users now have a consistent and single version of the truth. “Compassion is based on integrity so it’s crucial that all the data pooled and reported on is valid. And it’s also critical for us to ensure that the information is not going to be lost in the system,” stresses Haj-Hussein. “With Cognos Now!, we have peace of mind.”

Using Cognos Now!, the organization has also been able to reduce its reliance on the IT department for its reporting requirements significantly, while increasing employee productivity. “Previously, reports were generated from many sources and we had a lot of employees solely dedicated to developing reports,” states Haj-Hussein. “With Cognos Now!, users have gained self-reliance. They no longer need to go through IT to request a report or change the way it will look.”

“It’s extremely important for us to measure and evaluate the health of our new service-oriented architecture and the processes behind it,” affirms Haj-Hussein. “Cognos Now! has been very effective for us because it not only gave us a pulse on the general health of our system, but it also delivered this insight at a fraction of the cost of other approaches to operational BI.”

