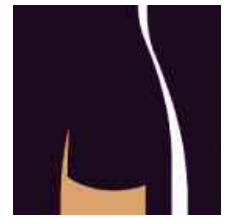


Mark Anthony Group (MAG)



“We rely heavily on Cognos 8 BI to get our information out to our sales team. We are able to push our reports out to them, rather than have them access the reports online. That’s been a big benefit for us and reduces the amount of time that they are spending in front of a computer. With this real-time access, our sales team has a leg up on the competition, and they can use this tool to increase the size of their accounts and even close major deals.”

Michael Der, BI Systems Manager, Mark Anthony Group

Based in Vancouver, BC, the Mark Anthony Group (MAG) is a privately-held manufacturer and distributor of fine wines, premium beer, and specialty beverages. The company’s brands include Mike’s Hard Lemonade, the number one brand in its category and largely responsible for the company’s phenomenal growth over the last several years. With revenues in excess of CA\$400 million per year, MAG’s primary markets are in North America.

With offices and distribution centers located across North America, MAG depends on a team of external partners to produce, distribute, and sell its products. With so many partners and locations involved at different stages of the production life cycle, MAG initially deployed Cognos ReportNet to ease reporting, and then chose to migrate to Cognos 8 BI to enable its sales force to gain full, real-time access to the information in their customer database.

Challenges faced

The Canadian alcoholic beverage industry is highly regulated by various branches of provincial and federal government bodies. This level of regulation allows distributors such as MAG to purchase customer and competitor information directly from the government that is otherwise unavailable at this level of detail and accuracy.

With a sizable number of SKUs and products, mixed with federal information on competitors, distributors, and bottlers, MAG had a growing database to manage and maintain. The organization needed to allocate more of its staff’s time to growing its business and increasing profitability through intuitive and integrated business intelligence (BI) sales tools.

Industry:

- Alcoholic beverage distribution

Geography:

- North America

Information Needs:

- One central reporting platform
- Easy-to-use solution
- User friendliness
- Seamless integration across multiple data sources
- Ability to grow with business

Platforms:

- SQL Server 2005
- MFG Pro ERP on a UNIX server
- Windows 2003 Server

Users:

- 125

Functional Area Deployed:

- Sales
- Marketing
- Finance
- Manufacturing
- Distribution and Logistics

Solution:

- Cognos 8 BI
- Cognos 8 Go! Mobile
- Cognos DecisionStream
- Cognos Consulting, Training and Support

Benefits:

- Better decision-making due to increased access to information
- Increased efficiency and integrity of data
- One version of the truth
- Delivery of reports and key metrics through executive level
- Company-wide view of corporate information



THE NEXT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE™

“Our biggest challenge was managing the immense amount of data we have and getting the right data over to our sales force,” says Michael Der, BI Systems Manager, Mark Anthony Group. “We needed to distribute our information in a timely manner.”

Strategy followed

MAG set out to find an integrated BI tool that would guarantee the data it had purchased from the government was available off-site, and ensure that its sales and marketing teams were receiving up-to-date and accurate information in the field. In early 2004, the company was looking for a Web-based reporting environment to eliminate running reports from a local client.

“In the beginning, we just wanted to use the information that we were buying from the government. We invested a lot into that data and it’s one of our most valuable assets,” recalls Der. “But a lot of the time we weren’t using it to the fullest capability. We wanted to provide our users with the tools to get data they could turn into useful information to close large deals.”

As part of evaluating technologies in 2004, MAG had two key requirements in mind for its ideal BI solution—a strong analysis capability, and scalability. MAG looked at Cognos, Crystal Reports, and Microsoft, ultimately deciding on Cognos ReportNet for its maturity in the market and its ability to allow users to manipulate the information to their advantage.

“We also liked the way Cognos products are supported by Cognos Consulting, Training, and Support,” states Der. “We needed to make sure that there was a strong community of users out there so that if we needed support or access to a knowledge base, it would be available not just today, but in the future.”

After its success with Cognos ReportNet, MAG decided to upgrade and standardize with Cognos 8 BI. In 2007, the company began a migration to Cognos 8 BI. After an 8-week process, the company seamlessly moved its reporting infrastructure into the new environment.

“One of the reasons that we chose to migrate to Cognos 8 BI, was to take advantage of Cognos 8 Go! Mobile,” states Der. “We eventually want all of our US field sales teams to access reports on their mobile devices through Cognos 8 Go! Mobile. We see the mobile solution as a simpler and more cost-effective alternative, opposed to having our field team carry laptops to access information in their customer sites.”

MAG decided to migrate simultaneously to Cognos 8 BI, and from SQL 2000 to SQL 2005. During the migration, Cognos Consulting assisted MAG in restructuring its data model. Users also participated in fast-track training, hosted by Cognos Training at the Cognos office in Vancouver, B.C. In preparation for the upgrade, MAG had also purchased Cognos DecisionStream and called in Cognos Consulting to assist in the report migration.

Currently, MAG has over 125 power users trained on Cognos and runs nearly 100 reports daily, depending on the business unit—manufacturing, distribution, and logistics of its Mike’s Hard Lemonade products, or the agency import wine business. In addition to field sales support, MAG uses Cognos 8 BI in inventory planning to determine the amount of glass or paper they need to buy for the packaging of their products.

Now, MAG runs Cognos 8 BI on Windows 2003 and SQL 2005 servers. The company’s ERP runs on MFG Pro ERP from a UNIX server.

“I don’t think we can ever say we are finished with BI because we are always looking at ways to use it differently,” says Der. “We tell our users, if you can dream up a way to look at the numbers differently, then we can use it. We want to encourage users to raise questions. If it is quantity-based, we are confident we can get that information.”

Benefits realized

“We are pleased with the way Cognos is working for us,” states Der. “Giving our users the ability to manipulate the information from our database has been an advantage for us. Especially with the amount of information that we produce, we are able to take advantage of that capability. Building analysis models from our own data wasn’t enough, we needed to manage the competitive information and identify gaps in our business as well.”

With Cognos 8 BI, MAG has been able to accelerate the delivery of business-critical information to its sales force, giving team members full insight into their customer accounts and also the ability to identify which accounts are potential customer wins.

MAG is also using Cognos 8 BI to measure critical success metrics like the amount of additional customers the company is gaining. This measurement used to take place on a monthly or quarterly basis, but can now be obtained weekly, so the company can view the amount of additional points of distribution they are gaining on a week-by-week basis. "We've always had data, but it wasn't easy to derive this information from it," states Der.

Der sums up his Cognos experience, "We rely heavily on Cognos 8 BI to get our information out to our sales team. We are able to push our reports out to them, rather than have them access the reports online. That's been a big benefit for us and reduces the amount of time that they're spending in front of a computer. With this real-time access, our sales team has a leg up on the competition, and they can use this tool to increase the size of their accounts and even close major deals."

About Cognos

Cognos, the world leader in business intelligence and performance management solutions, provides world-class enterprise planning and BI software and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance.

Cognos brings together technology, analytical applications, best practices, and a broad network of partners to give customers a complete performance system. The Cognos performance system is an open and adaptive solution that leverages an organization's ERP, packaged applications, and database investments. It gives customers the ability to answer the questions — How are we doing? Why are we on or off track? What should we do about it? — and enables them to understand and monitor current performance while planning future business strategies.

Cognos serves more than 23,000 customers in more than 135 countries, and its top 100 enterprise customers consistently outperform market indexes. Cognos performance management solutions and services are also available from more than 3,000 worldwide partners and resellers. For more information, visit the Cognos Web site at <http://www.cognos.com>.

