

UTi Worldwide Inc.



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Barry Burdis, Director - Enterprise Application Development, UTi Worldwide Inc.

UTi Worldwide Inc. (UTi) is an international, non-asset-based, global integrated logistics company providing air and ocean freight forwarding, contract logistics, customs brokerage, distribution, inbound logistics, truckload brokerage, and other supply-chain management services. The company serves a large and diverse base of global and local companies, including clients operating in industries with unique supply-chain requirements, such as pharmaceutical, retail, apparel, chemical, automotive, and technological. UTi uses its global network, proprietary IT systems, relationships with transportation providers, and expertise in outsourced logistics services to deliver a competitive advantage to its clients' global supply chains.

UTi initially deployed a Cognos solution in 2004 for warehouse management and client supply-chain dashboards, as well as for its client profitability and operational performance data warehouses. With Cognos, UTi is able to run operations such as packing, shipping, bar-coding, and manifesting efficiently at its distribution centers. In addition, the company now generates accurate pick lists quickly, manages supply-chain reliability, and measures profitability and margins for its key accounts, significantly improving customer satisfaction.

Challenges faced

At its core, UTi is a client-facing company with globally dispersed customers. As UTi's operations move clients' goods from place to place, bits and pieces of information are gathered on a fragmented basis. The company's biggest challenge was finding a business intelligence (BI) solution to gather all of the information in a structured manner.

“Primarily, we were interested in finding a BI technology that could consolidate a large amount of disparate data and then produce something really efficient and structured,” states Barry Burdis, Director - Enterprise Application Development, UTi Worldwide Inc.

“Secondly, but just as critical, we needed a solution

Industry:

- Logistics

Geography:

- Global

Information Needs:

- Web-based solution
- Scalability
- Structured reports based on reliable and consistent data
- Integration with existing applications

Platforms:

- Solaris
- Windows
- Oracle database

Users:

- 15,000

Functional areas of deployment:

- Company-wide deployment

Solutions:

- Cognos 8 BI
- Cognos Data Manager

Benefits:

- Structured, professional looking reports
- Substantial time and labor savings
- Improved quality of data resulting in better decision-making
- Seamless integration with existing applications
- Flexibility in creating new reports based on combined data from various sources



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that would allow our customers not only to get the information they need quickly, but also to be able to analyze it to make intelligent business decisions.”

In addition, UTi required a Web-based and scalable solution, given its global reach and large user base of more than 19,000 employees. Paramount in the company’s decision-making process was finding a technology that could integrate well with its other existing track-and-trace, operational Web-based applications.

Strategy followed

UTi evaluated several BI solutions, including Business Objects, Hyperion, and Microstrategy, before deciding to deploy Cognos 8 BI. The evaluation process was long and rigorous, but in the end, the Cognos solution was selected for its flexibility in terms of report generation, scalability, and ability to integrate seamlessly with UTi’s existing Web-based applications, as well as the Oracle database and Windows operating system.

UTi decided it was best to deploy Cognos on a rolling basis in an effort to cause the least amount of disruption to business operations across the organization.

“Our deployment strategy was incremental in nature. We did not want to halt business for a couple of years while we developed all of these reports, and then release them in one big batch, which would have seemed abrasive to our clients,” comments Burdis.

Over the past three years, UTi has successfully migrated to Cognos 8 BI as part of a staggered deployment. These migrations took place in 3-month increments, with groups of customers moving to Cognos 8 BI every quarter.

In addition, UTi received support from several Cognos partners during its rolling global implementation. Burdis felt the majority of the partners were very strong and skilled, even in remote places like South Africa, where UTi was supported by the Cognos local partner, Blitz BI Planning Services.

Cognos 8 BI is used for several strategic initiatives within UTi. One initiative is client reporting, which on the surface appears to be simple in nature, but is actually quite complicated.

“The client reports are not just basic lists, but contain strategic data which enables our customers to evaluate our performance at a granular level and provide feedback on potential improvements,” notes Burdis.

Benefits realized

With the recent migration to Cognos 8 BI complete, UTi is now able to run approximately 4,000 to 5,000 reports yearly on a global basis. Cognos 8 BI has enabled the company to customize these reports and monitor data more accurately.

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Burdis has also found that the Cognos 8 BI framework management tool has enabled him to reduce the maintenance associated with report generation and delivery. This tool has allowed UTi to create various templates and apply different standards. Now, each report can inherit certain properties from the framework, eliminating the need to apply the default setting every time a report is created. In addition to the time and labor savings realized from using the framework management tool, Burdis has also noticed a significant improvement in data quality.

“We now have an action plan in place to deal with misaligned processes or non-standard implementations. In the past, we would have swept these kinds of issues under the rug because we could not deal with them effectively,” comments Burdis.

Burdis estimates that some reports UTi used to create in Excel that would have taken two or three days to create are now produced in just minutes. An example of this time savings is a report that is created for one of UTi’s largest global chemical companies. UTi was spending two to three hours a month pulling data from the company’s transactional system and UTi’s financial systems. Now, with Cognos 8 Report Studio, Burdis is able to create a single report by pulling data from both systems. This report now takes a total of two to three minutes to generate and is automatically distributed to the clients.

Burdis sums up his Cognos experience by stating, “I think for the first time in many years our customers are finding that we are able to deliver a standard report every month that looks and feels professional. The manner in which the data is presented does not vary, which allows them to make better daily business decisions, and this is all because of Cognos 8 BI. Our users are very satisfied.”

