



## BUNCOMBE COUNTY

### EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT SERVICES WITH SAP® BusinessObjects™ SOFTWARE

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Michael Greene, Data Warehouse Manager,  
Buncombe County

#### QUICK FACTS

##### Company

- Name: Buncombe County
- Location: Asheville, North Carolina
- Industry: Public sector – local government
- Products and services: County government services
- Budget: Approximately US\$450 million
- Employees: 2,800
- Web site: [www.buncombecounty.org](http://www.buncombecounty.org)

##### Challenges and Opportunities

- Improve decision making for budget and resource usage
- Increase employee productivity by eliminating repetitive manual tasks
- Provide easy, simple data access to all employees

##### Objectives

- Implement a unified data warehouse to integrate data across multiple systems and departments
- Provide an easy-to-use Web interface to streamline data access and analysis

##### SAP® Solutions and Services

- SAP® BusinessObjects™ XI solutions
- SAP BusinessObjects Web Intelligence® software
- SAP BusinessObjects Xcelsius® Enterprise software
- Crystal Reports® software
- SAP BusinessObjects Data Integrator software
- SAP BusinessObjects Mobile software

##### Implementation Highlights

- Developed targeted reports to support goals of human services divisions
- Gained immediate user acceptance with end-user training
- Integrated data from 19 back-end systems

##### Why SAP

- User interface that is far ahead of the competition
- Depth of solutions
- Leadership position in industry

##### Benefits

- Higher employee productivity and job satisfaction
- Thousands of dollars saved per employee with reduction in manual processing and repetitive tasks
- More strategic, business-oriented decision making

##### Existing Environment

Solutions from Cerner, ESRI, Hummingbird, Lawson Software and Mitchell & McCormick



The Buncombe County government, headquartered in Asheville, North Carolina, has a simple but meaningful view of its role: “Buncombe County Government Is Your Government.” This statement reflects the county’s goal of providing the highest quality of life to the community through a wide range of services. Social workers, medical staff, librarians, child care workers, naturalists, police and fire workers, lifeguards, tax assessors, inspectors, and many others are all working to serve the population of nearly a quarter million citizens spread across a large geographic area at the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains.

Like many local governments, Buncombe County uses multiple applications and systems to support its nearly two dozen divisions and departments. However, because the data in these systems could not be easily aggregated, accessed, or shared, the county could not deliver services as efficiently and effectively as it wanted.

The Buncombe County government turned to the SAP® BusinessObjects™ portfolio to solve this dilemma. By implementing a suite of SAP BusinessObjects software solutions, the county has gained a centralized data warehouse and business intelligence solution that has helped to reduce manual processing and save thousands of dollars per employee. At the same time, easy data access and sharing across the organization have increased the county’s ability to make better-informed judgments about service delivery, budget expenditure, and resource usage.

### Information Needs Require Unified Data and Business Intelligence

Buncombe County began its SAP BusinessObjects implementation within its human services divisions – the county’s largest organization. With approximately 550 employees spread across many of the county departments, the human services organization describes its mission as ad-

ressing the changing needs of citizens by maximizing the effectiveness of county services while making the most efficient use of resources.

However, given the many disconnected spreadsheets, applications, and databases used by human services, meeting this goal was not easy. These isolated and often manual systems increased workload, slowing down the delivery of services. They also prevented a broader and more complete view of how citizens were using services across the county, making it difficult for employees to optimize expenditures.

Buncombe County determined that it needed a unified data warehouse combined with business intelligence. “What we wanted was a strong tool to put power in our employees’ hands. This would allow us to streamline processes and make better business decisions about the use of taxpayer dollars,” says Michael Greene, data warehouse manager for the county.

“It’s crucial that we use our taxpayers’ money wisely, and it has always been our goal to use our budget as efficiently as possible. SAP BusinessObjects software has helped us think more like a business. Because our staff members can now so quickly gather accurate and complete information, they are making better decisions about how, when, and where to use resources.”

**Michael Greene**, Data Warehouse Manager, Buncombe County



“SAP BusinessObjects software has really helped us meet the goal of putting power into our employees’ hands.”

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Data Warehouse Manager  
Buncombe County

## Benefits for Every Employee

The county considered a broad range of vendors that supply enterprise-level data warehousing and business intelligence solutions, including Cognos, Oracle, and SAS. “SAS presented its value from the database administrator’s point of view – making it easy for that person to do the job. But that wasn’t what we wanted. We wanted to make all the employees serving our citizens efficient, not just our IT department,” Greene notes.

SAP took a different approach, demonstrating how its software could benefit all of Buncombe County’s employees. Greene and his team were particularly impressed with the SAP BusinessObjects Web Intelligence® software, which would make it easy for employees to access and analyze data. “It was immediately obvious to us that SAP BusinessObjects software is light-years ahead of the competition in terms of ease of use. We knew our employees would quickly see the value,” says Greene.

Buncombe County also appreciated SAP’s leadership position in the industry and the depth of the software, recognizing that the county would be able to tie together its disparate systems in order to provide an accurate and complete picture of service delivery across the nine human services divisions.

Buncombe County decided to implement a full suite of SAP BusinessObjects software. In addition to SAP

BusinessObjects Web Intelligence, the county selected the SAP BusinessObjects XI solutions, BusinessObjects Xcelsius Enterprise software, SAP BusinessObjects Data Integrator software, Crystal Reports® software, and SAP BusinessObjects Mobile software. These solutions enable the county to connect information, departments, and employees regardless of the underlying business applications or data stores. As a result, Buncombe County has gained a trusted source of information that can be easily accessed and understood by employees.

## Immediate Acceptance of SAP Business Objects

As the human services organization was in the process of developing new goals, the implementation began with six reports for the most well-defined goals. These included reports on employee retention rate, performance reviews, sick hours, contract compliance, and disease tracking. Currently, the county has integrated data from 19 major systems including medical, pharmacy, and tax applications spread across the county.

During the implementation, Greene and his organization conducted two-day training classes for SAP BusinessObjects Web Intelligence. The user interface lived up to expectations; its simplicity and ease of use stimulated immediate interest and acceptance. “It was fascinating to watch our people instantly start thinking up ways the software could help them with their

daily tasks. It opened up so many possibilities to them,” Greene comments. It also solved many long-term problems. Greene demonstrated how easy it was to produce a report that showed which invoices had been paid and then filtered the report by check number. Greene adds, “A member of the finance team sat back in amazement and said, ‘I’ve been asking for this report for four years.’”

## A Shift to Strategic Services Delivery

With the SAP BusinessObjects software in place, the county manager now has a daily financial dashboard that provides graphic visibility into overall expenditures by department, helping her to accurately assess the expenditures toward the fiscal budget. So that the county can determine each doctor’s performance, a productivity report details how much time specific doctors worked, what was paid out to them, and the level of visit. The reports are also helping the county meet its goal of 89% employee retention by providing department-by-department insight into the percentage of employees leaving compared to the retention goal.

In addition, the SAP BusinessObjects software has helped the county improve productivity. For example, the staff member responsible for managing employee contracts used to spend endless hours compiling the data from a Microsoft Access database. “Now, all the information is available in one

place on a daily basis. Instead of spending hours gathering data, our contract manager spends his time analyzing performance to make sure the terms of contracts are being met and determine where intervention is needed," says Greene. Greene estimates that the county has already saved thousands of dollars per employee by eliminating the need for staff to engage in repetitive tasks to compile data. This has increased employee satisfaction and reduced the burden on the IT organization as well.

Greene believes the greatest value has been the county's enhanced ability to focus on more strategic issues instead of operational tasks. "It's crucial that we use our taxpayers' money wisely, and it has always been our goal to use our budget as efficiently as possible. SAP BusinessObjects software has helped us think more like a business. Because our staff members can now so quickly gather accurate and complete information, they are making better decisions about how, when, and where to use resources," says Greene.

### A County-Wide Implementation

The IT organization is now working with the department of social services, helping this large division to establish its service goals and determine what types of reports will be needed to support these goals. Greene's

team will also begin to implement SAP BusinessObjects Mobile so that on-the-road employees can access information through their BlackBerry devices.

Over the next few years, Buncombe County will deploy its SAP BusinessObjects software across all divisions and departments. At full deployment, there will be approximately 2,800 users, and the SAP BusinessObjects portfolio will be one of the county's four enterprise-level software packages. Eventually, Greene and his team hope to provide greater access to information directly to citizens through SAP BusinessObjects software, such as providing a Web site where they can see exactly how their tax dollars are being used at any point in time.

The implementation of the SAP BusinessObjects portfolio within the human services organization has already delivered real benefits, significantly increasing productivity and facilitating better use of resources and budgets. As the county implements the software across its many divisions and departments, Greene and his team look forward to providing these benefits to all of Buncombe County's employees. "SAP BusinessObjects software has really helped us meet the goal of putting power into our employees' hands," Greene concludes.

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