

LOGIX FRANCE USES BUSINESSOBJECTS™ EDGE TO CONTROL COMPUTER BRAND DISTRIBUTION

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Eric Nowak, Managing Director, Logix France, Belgium, and Luxembourg



CHALLENGE

Industry

IT products and solutions

Business Process

Supply chain, operations

Challenge

To broaden access to reporting without increasing computer department costs.

Why Business Objects?

Affordable, scalable business intelligence solution gives Logix the reporting prowess it needs for customers, partners, and internal users.

Business Objects Products and Services

BusinessObjects™ Edge

BusinessObjects Web Intelligence®

Crystal Reports®

Xcelsius®

A value-added distributor (VAD), Logix supplies hardware, architecture, software, applications, and services to IT professionals, and distributes over 100 computer brands throughout Europe. In France, about 20 of these brands are supplied exclusively to resellers, who use them as the basis for their own software solution offerings to customers. A small to medium-sized enterprise (SME), Logix has about 2,000 customers and about 150 partners in France alone.

Up until 2003, Logix used Excel to manage data used for reporting. With multiple people accessing and making changes to the spreadsheets, resulting figures often were inconsistent. The company's general management wanted to implement automated tools that would rapidly provide reliable figures and consolidated reports. In addition to monitoring its own indicators, Logix needed to provide all its suppliers, developers, manufacturers, and vendors with data and detailed reports on sales volumes, turnover by product, region, and reseller, names and details of end users for software license management, and much more. Each manufacturer or vendor has its own specific requirements on report formats and the frequency of deliveries. Supplier business models are constantly evolving as the markets change – affected by sales promotions, sales area changes, and different customer segmentation, for example. All these changes involve modification of each individual reporting framework. Logix needs to react swiftly to incorporate these changes in reports.

The various companies in the group all had different enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. At one time, Logix planned to implement a single ERP system to provide consolidated reports for Europe, but the solution would take time to implement and be expensive. Instead, Logix chose software from Business Objects, an SAP company. The solution was developed in three phases. Xavier Donche, IT Director at Logix, explains, “In the first phase, we set up a data warehouse that interfaced with BusinessObjects™ software, and we cleansed the data to ensure that the information was both reliable and consistent between the various group companies.” The IT team began building the first universes for general management and the executive committee. Within two and a half years, approximately 200 reports have been developed. “From the start, we needed a fine level of detail so that we could produce the consolidated reports required by general management,” says Donche. “In the second phase, using BusinessObjects 6.5 software in a client/server environment, we increased the universes and provided access to the reports for product managers, sales executives, and business unit managers. The reports were refreshed automatically and published via the InfoView component.” The IT team then looked at how it could further expand the user base and provide users with autonomy, without increasing IT costs and the IT team's workload. It was at this stage that Logix moved to the BusinessObjects Edge package.

APPROACH

BusinessObjects Edge enables expansion of the company's business intelligence (BI) user base without increasing costs. “We needed new reports all the time and could not increase our IT resources,” recalls Donche. “When BusinessObjects Edge appeared, we were immediately interested in it, not only because of its price, but also because it contains three products

packaged as a single offer: BusinessObjects Web Intelligence® software, Xcelsius® software, and Crystal Reports® software.”

The IT team quickly identified benefits of working with BusinessObjects Edge. “The development interface in BusinessObjects Web Intelligence mode is especially ergonomic and easy to use, and we were able to immediately allow some users the report development capability,” Donche says. “With BusinessObjects Web Intelligence, reporting is simple and users can create 80% of them.” Logix trained a pilot group of three users on the structure of the universes and then gave them the tool. The IT team now has the option to choose the most appropriate tool, either BusinessObjects Web Intelligence or Crystal Reports, to create reports in the most effective way, according to requirements and the complexity of the cross-referencing to be performed.

Logix has continued to enhance and develop the Business Objects universes, which have evolved from being quite technical to being more adapted to users’ needs. Donche explains, “For example, a product manager has to be able to link sales data to purchasing data, which is in different systems (purchasing, sales, margins). The universes need to be explicit and the relationships between the different sources totally transparent, while at the same time retaining consistency controls. This has led us to simplify our universes and structure the data model in a different way.”

RESULTS

BusinessObjects Edge is suited to all the company’s business functions. At Logix, about 60 users access BusinessObjects Edge via 10 floating simultaneous user licenses and 5 dedicated user licenses. “We can increase the number, depending on the success of the tool and training,” says Donche. “This software tool is especially well suited to a distributor’s operating methods as the distribution business requires constant daily tracking. Reports provide us with the ability to analyze purchases and sales by product, region, segment, and customer profile all the time.”

“Progressing from a general management analysis tool, BusinessObjects Edge is intended to become an operational tool to motivate the sales force,” says Eric Nowak, managing director at Logix France, Belgium, and Luxembourg. “At Logix, we have gradually enhanced the reports and distributed them to different user populations, including purchasing, accounting, finance, budgeting, and human resources.”

General management is particularly impressed with Xcelsius, which gives executives the facility to just point and click to access charts that use visual indicators and score counters, so decision-makers can easily identify any problems and new opportunities. “It’s interactive and simple to use,” says Nowak. “BusinessObjects Edge provides us with a quality tool that is simple and ideally suited to both our type of business and our size as an SME. About 60 users can monitor our purchasing, sales, and margin indicators in real time and provide reporting that is customized and at varying frequencies to suit both our suppliers and customers.”

The reports that Logix partners and suppliers now receive are vastly improved. Sophie Daval, manager of the software business unit at Logix, comments, “It used to take our product managers between one and three hours a week to compile the data, which they obtained from the various operational systems such as sales, purchasing, stocks, and deliveries. Today, creating the dashboards and charts and emailing them to suppliers is all done automatically.”

Donche concludes, “IT hardware and software distribution is a specialist business requiring complex reporting on purchases and sales for both the company’s internal teams and our product suppliers. BusinessObjects Edge has given us a solution that meets the challenges in our business. It’s a competitive product and matches our usage needs perfectly.”

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