Business Intelligence in major retail groups: understanding data in order to make progress

Our client has undertaken an important organisational and IT project aimed at standardising company processes into a single management model. Within the framework of the renewal project, PRAXI is working on the designing and creation of the new Business Intelligence system.

The information system of a retail business has to deal with a considerable volume of data on products, prices, costs and sales outlets, and it is not always possible to have quick access to the information necessary for making decisions. The Business Intelligence project proposed by PRAXI makes it possible to turn unprocessed, non-standardised data into in-valuable information that can be effectively summarised and easily consulted on executive dashboards and analysis tools.

Context

The context and the main critical issues encountered at the beginning of the project were:

- the identification of numerous different sources for the various analysis tools distributed throughout the various offices led to the lack of a single, certified environment for the collection of data on the situation of the business (margins, takings, warehouse activity and logistics...)

- the information supports and the analysis tools available to the various departments proved clearly fragmented, with a lack of standardisation. For example: reports in excel format updated manually, technologies introduced but not sufficiently exploited

- in a number of cases, application and analysis functions were mixed.

Project

PRAXI's experience and project approach made it possible to:

- standardise the system with the current review of the information system, in order to rationalise, optimise and create synergies in the organisation of data and the creation of interfaces for exchanging information

- adopt a project approach not simply limited to the installation and configuration of technology

- create and transfer, within the structure pertaining to the Client, the methods and tools necessary for the development and adjustment of the Business Intelligence system.

The technological solution selected by Praxi is QlikView, thanks to which the following objectives have been achieved:

- an integrated solution, complete with analysis, dashboard and alarms

- the possibility of analysing large volumes of data at high speed, thanks to the particular structure of the in-memory data model

- elimination of manual data entries on excel sheets

- rapid implementation

- a system that is easy to use and can be integrated with Office Excel (for exporting and importing data)

- access via web and via mobile, as well as full client access, with support for offline consultations

- end-user autonomy in the creation/customization of views and new reports, also in pivot table format

- possibility to set what-if analyses for simulation

- possibility to manage the budget process (data collection, verification process, approval...) within a single environment

- possibility of quick, easy integration (even temporary) of external data sources (from outside the database) to complete the structured analyses and for subsequent integration if appropriate

- reduction or consolidation of demand management roles within the ICT system, able to understand the requirements of the business and turn them into IT projects

- creation, within the work groups, of a project management orientation that makes it possible to achieve the objectives with the established levels of quality and in accordance with the established timescales and costs

- implementation of a training and professional development plan coherent with company strategies and with the appropriate technological and application standards

- streamlining and speeding up of the times required to carry out the activities

- improvement of the in-house processes for user support and supplier regulation.

Results

The Business Intelligence project carried out by PRAXI has made it impossible to improve the data analysis environment, achieving the following objectives:

- consolidation of the company datawarehouse in order to guarantee the data available from the various sources are unambiguous, certified, accurate, complete and synchronised, powered with automatically scheduled, documented ETL flows

- choice of a single business intelligence front end, suitable for the requirements, centrally managed and distributed via web to the various offices and users, with appropriate profiling; activation, for a number of profiles, of the possibility to view reports also via mobile/smartphone

- preparation of a management dashboard

- rationalisation of company reports, taking account of the needs of the various offices and sectors of business (sales, purchasing, marketing, warehouses, sales outlets...)

- elimination of the time required for manually copying elements or copying and pasting on excel sheets

- proposal of simulation scenarios (what-if analyses)

- proposal of new analyses and performance indicators, based on PRAXI's experience in the Business Intelligence and in particular in the retail and major retail group environment.