

Corrs Chambers Westgarth improves profitability analysis, cuts software licensing costs

Corrs Chambers Westgarth

industry:

Legal Services

country:

Australia

business challenge:

The need to provide greater reporting functionality using an existing business intelligence system that was too expensive to deploy to large numbers of staff across the company

solution:

Create a new business intelligence platform using Microsoft SQL Server technologies, delivered through the Microsoft SharePoint 2010 portal

services:

- Integration, Analysis and Reporting Services for Microsoft SQL Server 2008
- Deployment Services for Microsoft SharePoint 2010

results:

- Eliminated the need for a "prohibitive" spend on client licences and leveraged existing investments in data and portal server technologies
- Made business intelligence data available to a much wider range of employees, broadening the scope of reporting and analysis the firm could undertake
- Paved the way for more accurate and effective marketing through profitability analysis of marketing spend

Executive Summary

Legal firm Corrs Chambers Westgarth engaged Dimension Data to demonstrate how it could **build a business intelligence** reporting system using the firm's existing Microsoft database and portal technologies.

Client Overview

Founded in 1841, Corrs Chambers Westgarth is a leading Australian law firm. It advises corporate, commercial, financial institutions and government clients in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region across a range of practice areas. The firm has approximately 1,100 staff, including 600 lawyers and partners, at offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney.

Business Challenge

Corrs Chambers Westgarth maintains a reputation as one of Australia's most innovative law firms. Its lawyers and support staff work closely across four national offices to give clients an integrated and efficient service.

As part of this innovation, the firm made considerable investments in its business intelligence infrastructure that allowed it to extract data from its practice management software and create reports that showed the firm's staff utilisation, financial performance against set budgets and its most profitable clients. Towards the end of 2009, Corrs Chambers Westgarth was looking to expand its use of business intelligence, and to drive yet more business insight from its reporting infrastructure and provide this insight to a wider group of users across the firm. This required the firm to invest in more Cognos user licences.

"There was no question about the quality and business value of the reports, but the cost of all those extra licences would have been prohibitive,"

said Berys Amor, National Infrastructure and Applications Manager at Corrs Chambers Westgarth.

In addition, many staff members were not familiar with the Cognos PowerPlay interface, which required additional training to ensure that they could maximise their use of the tool to perform useful analysis.

Solution Delivered

In November 2009, Corrs Chambers Westgarth engaged Dimension Data to produce a proof of concept, recreating the firm's staff utilisation report using a range of Microsoft applications to which it already had access under its existing Enterprise Agreement.

Dimension Data built a business intelligence system using Microsoft SQL Server Integration Services to connect to data sources such as the practice management system and other financial applications.

It used Microsoft SQL Server Analysis Services to build data cubes and Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services to create reports.

"The final piece was Microsoft SharePoint 2010, which Corrs Chambers Westgarth had already acquired a licence for because it was planning to use it to replace its existing intranet and some Lotus Notes applications,"

said Mark Miller, General Manager, Microsoft Solutions – Application Integration at Dimension Data.

"We used SharePoint to create a portal which staff could use to access reports and dashboards. They could also use Microsoft Office Excel to download and manipulate the data."

"We can be more informed and have greater visibility into how the company works at a granular level."

Berys Amor, National Infrastructure and Applications Manager, Corrs Chambers Westgarth.

How We Delivered

Installing new applications and recreating the utilisation report took less than a month and impressed the relevant stakeholders within Corrs Chambers Westgarth and associates.

"Everything ran very smoothly and to schedule," says Amor. "The business intelligence committee was very impressed. Dimension Data's database consultant was very knowledgeable and also had a great manner in dealing with everyone here."

Following the success of the proof of concept, Corrs Chambers Westgarth and Dimension Data agreed to migrate all the firm's business intelligence requirements to the Microsoft platform.

Value Derived

For Corrs Chambers Westgarth, the principal benefit of moving from Cognos' business intelligence platform to one based on Microsoft SQL Server and Microsoft SharePoint was the freedom to roll out the existing business intelligence platform to a wider user base without incurring any additional significant and unnecessary cost for client licences.

Also, the familiar interface made it easy to train people on the platform and ensured they were more productive.

"When we signed a new Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft in July 2009, it included access to all those Microsoft technologies, so we could make reporting analysis available to a much broader range of people at a minimal cost," said Amor.

Having a single business intelligence system available across the entire firm will eliminate the need for custom SQL queries and ensure everyone is working from the same data.

"Now the different parts of the business can take the initiative, rather than having to wait for the finance people to create reports for them," said Amor.

"We can be more informed and have greater visibility into how the company works at a granular level, which will lead to more accurate and effective management."

The firm has created a series of focus groups, canvassing different business units on ways they may be able to use business intelligence and reporting.

"Once we've finished migrating our existing reports to the new platform, there are so many ways we can start mining the data," said Amor.

"For example, it will enhance the way we do marketing, because we'll be able to analyse the profitability and return on investment of our spending."

Staff are much more comfortable using Microsoft SharePoint and Microsoft Office Excel to access and analyse their reports than they were using the previous application interface.

"The finance people are very enthusiastic because now they can use Excel's pivot tables to analyse the data," said Amor.