

IBM Cognos BI and ETL solutions help Groupe Mutuel transform their central information system

Overview

■ Challenge

To rapidly implement a central data warehouse (DWH) along with a comprehensive reporting and analysis application; needed to create the BI environment in parallel to implementing the core system components.

■ Why IBM?

Solution provided customisation options through IBM Cognos Software Development Kit and multilingual administration; IBM Cognos Data Manager has a proven track record for extract, transform and load (ETL); IBM Cognos BI provided browser-based application, analyses that could integrate with the company's portal, optimised display and integration of information, ability for users to work autonomously and easy adaptation and maintenance.

■ Solution

- IBM Cognos 8 BI

■ Benefits

The company can now manage its activities more efficiently, make faster, better-founded decisions and identify trends at an earlier stage.



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The Swiss health insurance group, Groupe Mutuel, is market leader in the French speaking part of Switzerland and number three nationally. With its 15 health insurance companies, it is a leading player in the Swiss healthcare system. Taking on its current structure in 1993, the group has roots that date back to 1852. As expert in all categories of personal insurance, the Groupe Mutuel, Association d'assureurs, offers a complete range of insurance products: compulsory health insurance, supplementary health insurance coverage and corporate insurances (daily allowances and accident insurance). Groupe Mutuel also offers

life insurance products through its life insurance company Groupe Mutuel Vie GMV SA and occupational pension benefits through its two pension funds. With about 900,000 individual clients and 13,000 companies insured, the member companies of Groupe Mutuel generate a combined turnover of more than 3.1 billion Swiss francs. Based in the Swiss town of Martigny, the group operates seven service centres throughout the German and French speaking parts of Switzerland. With 35 agencies, Groupe Mutuel has a presence in almost every canton and employs 1,500 persons.

Challenges faced

The NOVA project – technology serving the customer

The continued success of a modern company depends on its technology and information system. Fierce competition among health insurers and rising health care costs are driving demand for even more precise management tools. And this precise management often includes analyses and reporting of the most important company sectors. Companies now need to be able to create previews, identify cost trends and react quickly in the event of deviations.

Against this background, in 2006 Groupe Mutuel embarked upon a reorganisation of its processes and the complete redesign of its information system. The scope included replacing the group's existing platform and legacy software, based on a technology that no longer met its requirements.

The aim of the NOVA project was the complete redesign of the group's central information system, including all the data management and communication tools required to ensure optimal customer care in the health, life and corporate insurance business lines. In addition to the development of the new

core application, the project included migration of the platform as well as of all the data structures and the analysis and reporting functions.

BI solution and data warehouse

In addition to designing the data warehouse and associated loading and synchronisation processes, the biggest challenge was to make the BI application available within four weeks of commissioning the associated component in the main system. Implementation took place in stages, but BI specifications needed to be drawn up for each new component in NOVA. This specification stage included the development of a prototype, data quality checks and validation. The BI component was therefore being developed in parallel to the central information system, and the data warehouse had to be provided without precise knowledge of the source system data model.

Strategy followed

Clear technology decision

On the basis of its positive experience with IBM® Cognos® products since 1999, and the fact that the current IBM Cognos 8 BI product met all of Groupe Mutuel's requirements, the IBM Cognos solution was selected with no further evaluation.

“When Groupe Mutuel decided to replace its business intelligence platform as part of the redesign of its central information system, a new central data warehouse was created based on an Oracle database. The IBM Cognos 8 BI reporting and analysis suite was installed in parallel to the commissioning of the ETL functional areas. The IBM Cognos BI suite has fulfilled our expectations and requirements in terms of easy adaptation and maintenance, as well as the greater autonomy of the user in the execution of analyses and reports.”

Boris Horquin, Data Warehouse Project Manager with Groupe Mutuel

One key focus was the creation of a central data warehouse in the company. To develop an architecture capable of supporting a “real-time” data warehouse, the Groupe Mutuel created a central data store based on the IBM Cognos business intelligence solution with an ODS (Operational Data Store) component and data transferred by Oracle streams. This has allowed data from different sources to be centralised, while the IBM Cognos products have helped to simplify analyses and reporting.

The strong data warehouse orientation of both IBM Cognos 8 BI and IBM Cognos Data Manager was a key benefit in this implementation. Other key factors in favour of the solution included the ability of the solution to integrate analyses in the application, as well as tools designed to promote user autonomy within the various departments. The Groupe Mutuel uses multilingual options for German, French and Italian, along with single sign on to the main NOVA application – and these deliver benefits in the areas of usability and security. The company was also influenced by the fact that IBM Cognos 8 solution is a complete suite, and the SDK (Software Development Kit) opens up the option of creating additional customised features.

A daily refresh feature guarantees up-to-date information, with BI functionality integrated in both the portal and the company solution. The fact that no

installation is required on the client side is another advantage, since functions are accessed via a Web browser.

Since the implementation of the BI solution, the data warehouse/BI team has become the official supplier of all kinds of analyses, reports and statistics throughout the entire company. The solution delivers great autonomy for users within the company’s various business sectors.

A capable data warehouse/BI team

To address challenges in relation to complexity, dependencies, data quality, validation and the rapid, parallel implementation of the BI functionality, an additional eight members were recruited to the data warehouse/BI team, which has been headed up by Boris Horquin since 2004. These individuals were selected on the basis of their technical and methodological skills, as well as their specific IT expertise, in particular experience with BI project methodology, as well as knowledge of Oracle databases. These skills were essential to combine the technologies of Cognos Series 8 (Data Manager, Report Studio, Query Studio, AnalysisStudio®) with the options opened up by the Oracle database.

Benefits realised

The NOVA project is advancing at a rapid pace. And the company is reaping the rewards of years of preparatory work and a structured methodology. The data warehouse environment is running smoothly, with the successful

implementation of a wide range of reports and cubes.

Some of the first users of the solution were employees from the “Quotations” area. They use the system to monitor activities and productivity across the relevant input channels. Sales managers use it to analyse agent policies, while the Human Resources department use it to monitor staffing levels and to check absences.

The new solution is allowing Groupe Mutuel to manage its activities more efficiently, to take faster, better founded decisions and to identify trends at an earlier stage. All areas and functions are being mapped step-by-step in NOVA before being implemented in the data warehouse/BI solution.

One important benefit to emerge during the planning and structuring phase was the solution’s support for the data warehouse environment through the IBM Cognos 8 BI solution and IBM Cognos Data Manager. The company’s requirement for low maintenance costs has been addressed by the fact that no installation is required on the client side. The single-sign-on option is another key benefit in everyday use. Users log in once to the NOVA portal and can then access all authorised functions and a full range of BI tools, including an integrated

display of results, helping them to work more autonomously.

Groupe Mutuel's requirement for optimised display and integration of information has been fulfilled, multilingual administration options are available and the SDK allows the creation of customised functions.

Defined thresholds and alerts can be triggered. For example, a report can be sent to the appropriate manager in the event of excessive response times in the call centre, or any other deviation in a monitored value. Another benefit emphasised by the Groupe Mutuel is the integrated audit interface.

About IBM Cognos BI and Performance Management

IBM Cognos business intelligence (BI) and performance management solutions deliver world-leading enterprise planning, consolidation and BI software, support and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. IBM Cognos solutions bring together technology, analytical applications, best practices, and a broad network of partners to give customers an open, adaptive and complete performance solution. Over 23,000 customers in more than 135 countries around the world choose IBM Cognos solutions.



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