

Argility Reduces Budget Process by 66% with IBM Cognos Express
Herman de Vries, CFO, Argility

Moderator: Welcome to an IBM Cognos Express mid-sized business analytics success story video. In this video, IBM and Totem Consulting, an IBM advanced business partner, speak to Herman DeVries, CFO with Argility, and an innovative international software solutions company providing merchandising and point of sale solutions to world class retailers. Recently Argility upgraded their budgeting and forecasting solution by purchasing the IBM Cognos Express Accelerator module from Totem Solutions. Argility has enjoyed great benefits from the implementation reducing budgeting and forecasting from three months to one month with much more accurate and reliable data. Let's hear how Herman describes their former challenges.

Herman de Vries: Over the last couple of years, Argility grew exponentially as a business. This resulted in us needing a lot more information with regards to the company structures, products and service offerings. And we needed reporting to Cato for all that and also to be able to budget in all those different dimensions that we previously didn't have.

The challenges we're facing, we're part of a bigger group so very short reporting deadlines that we have to add yet to every month. So I cannot afford to have processes that take me a lot of time to complete. Our users now need to report specifically catered for their needs where previously we could push outstanding reports, non-customized reports and the same for everyone from a line manager to an account manager to an executive all receiving the same report.

Now we can't do that anymore. Users have become more sophisticated. They need reports specifically catered for their needs. So you need to be able to slice and dice, report in different dimension and on the fly be able to make changes to suit their needs.

Moderator: Herman goes on to discuss what Argility was looking for when they turned to IBM Cognos Express.

Herman de Vries: We needed to improve the efficiency of our budget. It took way too long previously. We had to shorten the cycle to be able to push out the information to users much sooner. Also we wanted to use a professional firm with a proven track record and didn't want someone who had put our business at risk and not deliver on the project.

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So I wanted to give them that ability to budget and forecast at a detailed level. If they wanted to budget for their top hundred customers they can do that now where previously we focused on our top ten only. Also previously we had standard input forms so they had to massage and manipulate the data to fit into those forms. Now we can adjust input forms on the fly and to cater specifically for their needs.

Moderator: Herman mentioned some of Accelerator's features and then discusses the IT and business benefits that Argility has received from IBM Cognos Express, including eliminating their need for IT's help during Argility's budget preparation, which ranged from 10 to 20 hours per week.

Herman de Vries: In Accelerator in the queue view we can slice and dice data and even to look at information we've already input to look at it from different angles. Like I said before, changing inputting that's on the fly. Spreading of data is a fantastic feature of Cognos Accelerator where you can forecast going forward based on historic results.

The biggest benefit I would say is that we now see a lot less of IT. Accelerator has very few bugs. Once we had it installed it ran smoothly and we didn't have to call on IT every second day to come and assist us to help fix bugs or get users re-set up. Everything just seemed to run very smoothly.

But what I can say is from when we previously took, our budgeting cycle was between two and three months and it was still a stretch to get everything done within that time. We now complete our budget within one month easily, but the quality and depth of information that we are now able to provide to users has improved significantly. We get comments from all over business that someone's looking for information about a customer where it's going wrong from budget. It can go to a very detailed level and give that information where previously that wasn't possible.

Accelerator is a fantastic tool for a medium sized firm to do budget and forecasting. It's very flexible. It's customizable. You can constantly improve as your business grow and improve. You can improve the tool as well adding more detail, adding more layers.

Moderator: Finally Herman talks about Argility's positive relationship with Totem Consulting.

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Herman de Vries: Totem's experience and product knowledge of Accelerator proved invaluable to us in the project. They delivered on time. They made sure the quality was up there as much as we could expect. I mean they really tried to assist us to not just replicate what we did in previous budgets. They pushed us to always do more, to do better, to do more detail and to make the process run smoother and automate as much as we could.

Totem delivers on their promises. They stood with us. They were always available. They made sure that we delivered the project on time, working late nights, putting in long hours and they were totally committed to the project.

Moderator: That wraps up today's video. Thank you to Herman DeVries, Argility and Totem Consulting, an IBM Advanced Business Partner.

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