

Harry-Brot



“Thanks to the Cognos-based standardization of our BI environment, Harry-Brot’s managers and departments have access to all the business information they need to make well-founded strategic and operational decisions. The continuous capture, tailored analysis, and regular provision of all key data and performance indicators is the secret behind the market success that has accompanied Harry-Brot for generations.”

Heiner Kruse, System Development Manager at Harry-Brot



The motto “Fresh like Harry” applies to more than just the bakery products made by Harry-Brot GmbH. Figures, reports, and statistics for business decisions also need to be fresh and up to date. How do you obtain such fresh financial data? How do you ensure that information is up to date? And how do users access this information? To provide departments with all the data they need, while simultaneously lightening the workload of the IT department, Harry-Brot has standardized its reporting and analysis environment. An IBM infrastructure and Cognos technology now ensure easy access to business information and provide sound foundations for decisions.

With eight industrial baking facilities, 3,300 employees, and annual revenue of 580 million euros in 2007, Harry-Brot GmbH occupies a leading position in the German bread market. The company makes more than 60 types of bread, including whole loaves and sliced loaves, whole-grain, mixed-grain, multi-grain, toast, and sandwich bread. In keeping with its motto “Fresh like Harry,” the finely calibrated logistics of the Harry Frischdienst (Harry fresh delivery service) supplies freshly baked goods to 9,000 retail food outlets daily in northern, eastern, and western Germany. Since 1996, Harry-Brot has also supplied baking stations for the supermarket and consumer market based on the pre-bake model, offering a variety of pre-baked loaves and frozen rolls. The tenth generation of the bread and bakery products specialist is enjoying great success, and convincing its customers of the quality of its products day after day.

To meet stringent quality requirements and tailor its offering to market demand, Harry-Brot relies on business intelligence (BI). Cognos 8 BI is a standard platform that ensures optimal support for decision-making processes. Harry-Brot receives rapid feedback about which recipes customers like and can identify any optimization potential for its bakery products. However, it wasn’t always this easy.

Industry:

- Consumer goods

Geography:

- Germany

Users:

- 600

Functional areas of deployment:

- Sales
- Quality management
- Materials procurement

Information needs:

- Standardization of the reporting and analysis platform
- Web-based access to standardized information
- Involvement of departments in the creation of reports and analyses
- Optimal decision-making foundations for a product offering tailored to market demand

Platform:

- IBM Websphere
- IBM DB2 UDB
- IBM Tivoli Access Manager

Solution:

- Cognos 8 BI

Benefits:

- Web-based information logistics
- More efficient distribution of information
- Standardized view of sales, production, and other business figures
- Reduction in IT workload and costs
- Process automation

Challenges faced

Even before Harry-Brot decided to standardize its information logic, it was able to create different types of reports. However, a specific reporting system had to be used for each application. What's more, users needed in-depth knowledge of the applications to create a report. The IT department was obliged to set up all the required reports and analyses manually.

"Time-consuming, expensive, and meaningless," states Heiner Kruse, System Development Manager at Harry-Brot, summing up the starting situation. Therefore, back in the 1990s, Harry-Brot decided on a change of strategy: cross-application analyses instead of application-specific analyses.

"Since then, Harry-Brot's strategy has been based on giving departments direct access to the required operational data. Business experts can then create the reports and analyses themselves," says Kruse, explaining the new strategic approach used today.

Strategy followed

The previous Cognos solutions had already proved very successful. Cognos ReportNet and Cognos PowerPlay gave the departments central access to data and analysis tools. Overall, and for the first time ever, business managers were able to create reports and analyses independently and without any programming effort. This positive experience with Cognos products was the reason behind the decision to use Cognos 8 BI as the basis for further standardization of the analysis and reporting environment and the replacement of additional legacy applications and proprietary solutions. Harry-Brot planned to have the entire BI environment converted to the new platform by the end of 2007.

The seamless integration of the Cognos 8 BI architecture with the IBM components used at Harry-Brot was a decisive factor. The application server is IBM WebSphere, and data is stored in an IBM DB2 UDB. The actual BI technology will run on the IBM pSeries.

"The interaction between Cognos and the IBM components is excellent, with no problems whatsoever," says Heiner Kruse, emphasizing the seamless integration of the Cognos products with the Tivoli Access Manager. "We maintain roles once in Tivoli and synchronize this data with the personnel department, and can therefore ensure that only authorized employees have access to BI information or other applications within the company."

In addition, the Cognos zero-footprint architecture is easy to maintain since no software installation is required on the user client. Significant quality improvements have also been achieved, with optimized reporting and analysis as a result of the replacement of the previous heterogeneous application landscape. Cognos 8 BI combines all BI functions in a single product, ensuring consistent data, rapid access to different data sources, and high-quality analyses. The application also offers a wide range of formatting options and can easily be adapted to meet the needs of different user groups. The departments can create all the required reports themselves. A metadata catalogue ensures user-friendly operation, with cryptic database names for technical managers converted directly to terms that can be understood by users. For instance, the database field "S34A_382" is converted directly to "turnover," eliminating any risk of comprehension errors in advance.

"Our department users do not need to worry about the database structure, they can concentrate on their business," explains Heiner Kruse.

Benefits realized

From a business point of view, the bread and bakery products specialist is reaping the benefits of the standardization of its BI environment in terms of reduced maintenance and administration costs. Throughout the entire company, all departments within Harry-Brot can access a standardized view of sales, production, and other business figures through a Web browser. In the majority of cases, department users can create their own analyses according to their requirements, resulting in a reduction in process costs. Procedures can also be automated—for example, automatic triggering of orders for suppliers or analyses of customers.

In terms of user groups, Cognos is bringing particular benefits to the sales department at Harry-Brot. Demand analyses and success factors for each individual bread and bakery product can be easily determined, and continuous improvements made to day-to-day production. After all, recipes should be in line with customers' tastes. Quality management and materials procurement employees also rely on inventory planning analyses and comparisons of stocks to consumption. After all, if there's no flour then there's no bread, and without a winning recipe the bread won't taste good.

“The introduction of Cognos 8 BI represents a major step towards establishing a standardized, enterprise-wide reporting and analysis platform,” says Heiner Kruse. “We are now able to determine precisely and in real time which of our products are in particular demand and identify links with market development.”

As well as extending the installation to 600 users, Harry-Brot plans to link its analysis and reporting environment with company planning. This direct feedback of market knowledge to company planning will ensure comprehensive performance management. The delivery of a new type of bread and the associated market analysis has already allowed management to quantify success—both in financial terms and with

regard to the next steps to be taken, such as creating additional production capacity. Performance management is the key to further growth. Harry-Brot’s success is by no means down to chance, it is the result of consistent analysis and planning. Harry-Brot bakes what customers like!

About Cognos, an IBM company

Cognos, an IBM Company, is the world leader in business intelligence and performance management solutions. It provides world-class enterprise planning and BI software and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. Cognos was acquired by IBM in February 2008. For more information, visit www.cognos.com.