


“Increasing complexity, combined with time-consuming adjustments and consolidations, stretched our traditional spreadsheet system for annual budgeting to its limits. Cognos Contributor and Cognos Analyst now allow us to plan our resources rapidly and reliably, while offering the capacity to cope with our future growth.”

*Martin Stocker, Finance and Controlling Manager, ZHW*



The Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur (ZHW) is one of the biggest multi-disciplinary universities of applied sciences in Switzerland and is a member of the Zürcher Fachhochschule ZFH. It has five faculties – Architecture, Economics, Technology, Communication, and Health – offering 18 Bachelor’s degree courses (3,400 students), a Master’s degree program and continuation course, 14 continuing education Master’s courses, and around 150 certificate programs and further education courses (2,600 students). Its 20 institutes and 36 centers and departments research topical and practical issues in cooperation with partners from business and industry.

The high number of service providers and an extremely variable annual intake of new students raise significant challenges when it comes to planning resources. With a cost budget of around 150 million Swiss francs (80-85 percent of which is accounted for by staff expenses for around 1000 employees), prompt and accurate budgeting is essential. The university’s existing spreadsheet-based data entry and consolidation system had become so large and complex it was almost unmanageable.

In addition to this, the cost of maintaining and adapting the solution made the conversion to a professional tool a necessity. The objectives for the new solution were simplified and streamlined data entry in all of the 115 or so budget/organizational units, and rapid consolidation. Furthermore, the solution also had to be capable of handling budget modifications and performing the required recalculations. Cognos Contributor and Cognos Analyst have achieved these objectives and established reliable and expandable foundations for planning and consolidation, in addition to providing a far clearer overview.

#### **Sector:**

- Education

#### **Geography:**

- Switzerland

#### **Information requirements**

- Planning and budgeting system

#### **Platform:**

- Abacus, Evento

#### **Users:**

- Around 110 users in all faculties, at the rectorate, and in the administration department

#### **Solution:**

- Cognos 8 Planning

#### **Benefits:**

- Simplified, secure, and rapid entry of data
- Consolidated, prompt provision of information
- Significantly improved process for daily resource planning

## **Challenges faced**

ZHW’s budgeting procedure involves all organizational units. On the one hand, it follows a top-down approach, with management setting contribution targets for the faculties, taking cantonal requirements into consideration. As a funding body of the university, the canton of Zurich approves contributions and also specifies the maximum contribution per course of study. On the other hand, the faculty institutes, departments, and centers report their requirements in a bottom-up process. These figures are consolidated and any required adjustments made to ensure they are in line with management’s contribution targets. These two processes produce a consolidated budget which management and

the education inspector then approve. Corrections and amendments are common, in which case the calculation process begins again.

Over the years, the traditional spreadsheet-based solution, with a file for each of the 115 budget/organizational units, had grown to such a size it was no longer capable of handling all requirements. The process for selling and purchasing hours (internal billing of services) – a core element of budgeting – was becoming increasingly complex and unclear. Faced with growing volumes of files, the existing solution struggled to cope with consolidation, in particular in the event of budget modifications. In addition, maintenance and modification costs were rising inexorably.

### Strategy followed

After some initial discussions, the university decided in favor of Cognos Contributor and Cognos Analyst, with the implementation partner ENTECH Enterprise Technology AG. The fact that the Cognos user interface operated on a similar principle to the existing spreadsheet system was an important factor in the decision, encouraging user acceptance and reducing training costs. The selected procedure was extremely practical, starting with the creation of a prototype as proof of concept. This was followed by final confirmation of the decision for Cognos and implementation of the complete solution, including a connection to Evento, the university's management system, and the Abacus financial solution.

Cognos partner ENTECH handled the implementation, completing it within the budgeted cost framework and on schedule, within just two months.

Managers of the organizational units now use Cognos Contributor to enter their data decentrally, with the entry status monitored centrally by the Finance and Controlling department. The figures are consolidated regularly during scheduled processes and transferred to Abacus.

### Benefits realized

The Cognos solution now allows rapid consolidation across individual hierarchy levels, enabling faster comparison with targets. It has also simplified continuous monitoring over all budget stages, bringing a clearer view of results for the individual areas (contribution margins for courses of study, continuing

education, research and development, services for external customers, and consulting, for instance) and overheads. Data imports from the Evento and Abacus downstream systems and data exports to the Abacus finance solution run smoothly.

The integrated workflow management ensures that the central finance department is aware of the status of planning activities at all times. An integrated email function streamlines communication. For example, if a budget is rejected, budget managers can find out allowing efficient calculation and posting of internal sales of hours with no need for time-consuming manual adjustments. Shorter processing times have boosted the efficiency of the budgeting process, eliminating discrepancies between hours purchased and hours sold.

### About Cognos

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Cognos brings together technology, analytical applications, best practices, and a broad network of partners to give customers a complete performance system. The Cognos performance system is an open and adaptive solution that leverages an organization's ERP, packaged applications, and database investments. It gives customers the ability to answer the questions — How are we doing? Why are we on or off track? What should we do about it? — and enables them to understand and monitor current performance while planning future business strategies.

Cognos serves more than 23,000 customers in more than 135 countries, and its top 100 enterprise customers consistently outperform market indexes. Cognos performance management solutions and services are also available from more than 3,000 worldwide partners and resellers. For more information, visit the Cognos Web site at [www.cognos.ch](http://www.cognos.ch).

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