

Extending the Scope of the Habitat Reporting Solution

Background

Following a technical upgrade to the Habitat Group buying, merchandising and supply chain reporting solution, Yves Gauguier, Group IT Director of Habitat in conjunction with the Range and Supply Chain Management (RSCM) business function, requested that Retail Acumen review a number of new requirements to extend the scope of the existing system with the following objectives:

1. To enable users to generate historical reporting on key KPIs, removing the need to retain spreadsheet records, which had been the only historical reporting they had prior to this work
2. To provide a data validation process for extracted SAP data to proactively highlight issues

The value to the business of the historical analysis was to be able to identify trends and anomalies in the patterns of consumption across product, department, division and country and to compare historic and potential future over stock and out of stock scenarios.

System Constraints

The constraints for the development were to provide a solution that:

1. Would deliver results within 2 months since the lifetime of the solution was not known as the planned SAP upgrade (which would replace this solution) had been put on hold.
2. Would deliver a minimum 12 months historic analysis, in terms of output and storage capability
3. Could be delivered piecemeal to provide reports as soon as they were available
4. Required least possible end user training

The platform for the existing Extract, Transformation and Load (ETL) process was Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000 and there was no scope to change this within the project. The testing of the reports was to be carried out by the business (RSCM) and would ensure that the output tied up with existing historical spreadsheet data.

Due to the timescale it was necessary to put together a project team that could deliver a consistent output despite working independently on different aspects of the development. Therefore the specification process was even more critical in defining the content, process flow and format of the completed system to enable the team to work effectively and to a common goal.

Managing Change

Retail Acumen ensured that the project was on time and on budget and in a number of cases were able to highlight issues in previously recorded historical data. This was made possible as a result of our extensive experience of the business processes gained from previous work on the technical upgrade.

The original process to load the SAP data was transparently replaced by a new version which not only analysed and processed the live data but also refreshed the information in the 'data warehouse'

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required for the historical data analysis. This only added a small additional overhead to the daily and weekly data upload processes.

The delivery utilised Retail Acumen's project and change management as well as technical resources and retail business knowledge. As we worked alongside the business we quickly realised that the users' believed their historical data was accurate and had been taking commercial decisions based on it. We identified that the data was often inaccurate. We managed this change of paradigm with the business to achieve user acceptance of the new, accurate data. This gave rise to the need to change certain commercial decisions, which in turn delivered rapid benefits realisation. This change management was as critical an aspect of the project as the technical delivery itself, in order to ensure success.

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