

Pfizer partners with iCapella to maximise business data and realise major operational savings

One of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies, Pfizer develops and produces drugs that improve the quality of life for countless individuals in need of effective and safe therapies. To address the world's growing health problems with novel and better tolerated medicines, and shape the growth and future direction of the company, the firm relies on the fast and efficient sharing of accurate and detailed business information across its global sites.

Intelligence at the heart of the business

The bulk of Pfizer's operations are housed in North America, including a New York Headquarters and six key sites focused on the core business of Research and Development and Consumer Healthcare. To handle the financial and transactional accounting data these vast, and geographically dispersed, teams generate on a daily basis, a dedicated department – the North American Shared Services (NASS) – was set up by Pfizer in 1996.

Located in Memphis, this group provides a central resource for handling back office tasks such as accounting functions - specifically Accounts Payable (AP), Time and Expenses (T& E) and Fixed Assets (FA) - for all the firm's North American sites. It also has responsibility for producing and delivering critical Business Intelligence (BI) reports to the firm's key decision-makers, based on the valuable operational, business and financial data it collects while performing core administrative tasks.

Generating tailored BI reports required NASS to access data stored in a central repository at the New York Headquarters site. This information was being downloaded and stored in a localised database on-site in Memphis to enable its quick retrieval, and avoid the timely delays caused by multiple users accessing the central repository at the same time. However, this system began to present significant performance issues for the group.

Real-time data for real-time decision-making

As well as the time-intensive method of gathering such data from an off-site server, the local database in Memphis was not being synchronised in real-time with the data repository in New York – creating two pictures of the same information. Any discrepancies in NASS's local database would not be picked up by the team until information was downloaded from the central databank again. For NASS the potential risk was that critical business information could become out of date immediately and, as such, significantly compromise the accuracy and validity of the BI

reporting service it provides to the rest of the business.

System inflexibility was also affecting the availability of certain BI reports, particularly those crucial to helping Pfizer streamline its business, increase efficiency and save money. And, from an operational viewpoint, multiple users simultaneously obtaining data from the New York repository was beginning to create an unacceptable drain on the server, which was threatening to impact network stability and system 'uptime.'

Paula Ziadie, Manager of Business Enabling at Pfizer in Memphis, explained, "We rely on information being up-to-date and accurate, otherwise the BI reports we generate could effectively become redundant the moment we issue them to the business. As these reports are used to make critical business decisions we can't afford to take that risk. With our existing system creating significant reporting restrictions for the team, finding a solution that would address both accessibility and accuracy issues became critical to the continued success of our operations."

One powerful engine, multiple business applications

To Address these issues NASS required a solution that would simplify data access for its staff – whilst increasing the quality and number of BI reports it was able to provide to the business. The group looked to BI specialists icapella and its unique Datamart reconciliation system, to draw information from the New York repository and replicate it to the local server in Memphis. The solution is now enabling any number of users to access accurate business data, in a straightforward and easy-to-use format, and with no threat to network performance.

Daily screening of the New York data repository also identifies any changes in real-time and automatically updates the Datamart system the same night. Replication occurs between 5am and 7am, providing NASS users with up-to-date information as soon as the business opens each day.

The Datamart solution has not only provided a stable and resilient source of data but its added drill-down functionality is also enabling NASS users to explore Pfizer's financial activities in minute detail – providing key decision-makers with a much wider, more definitive and intricate view of the company's operations on which to base business-critical decisions. Users can view information in many

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formats, and access mission-critical reports remotely via a web browser for use in off-site meetings.

Joel St. Francis, Assistant Manager of Accounts Payable at Pfizer in Memphis, said, "One of the major advantages of working with the iCapella Data Mart is a push technology the system uses. Any changes made in New York are automatically sent through to the reports using that data, including the supporting drill-down information. We can now access more accurate information, more easily, to deliver BI that helps increase the efficiency of the business."

Extensive software potential

With implementation of the Datamart complete, and providing NASS with a robust and powerful data housing platform, the group looked to iCapella to extend the system's capabilities to support a wide-range of reports and multitude of new applications.

The first of these was a Month in Review report. Produced by NASS to provide a monthly picture of financial performance, the report is used by decision-makers to evaluate and forecast areas where potential savings can be made. Utilising the Datamart's push technology to review figures such as profit, loss and turnover in real-time, Pfizer has now generated significant efficiency gains across the business - not only within its day-to-day operations but also in the time taken to produce this complex report. Cutting the production time from three weeks to just one day, Ariel's unique and Powerful solution has enabled NASS to reduce the time- and resource-intensive task of compiling and distributing this BI information.

Clear departmental reporting

Supplier payment is another area that Pfizer in Memphis was keen to streamline by improving and enhancing the way it processes financial data. Many factors determine payment efficiency, including settlement within payment terms, use of automated or manual processes and the frequency of bank errors. Addressing these issues would see Pfizer benefiting from both cost and time savings.

To monitor department-wide payments Pfizer developed a process to determine payment efficiency based on key metrics from individual transactions, such as the transaction date and method. From this iCapella built a technical system called 'Procure to Pay', a Scorecard system using the Datamart to deliver these key metrics and score each transaction. Procure to Pay allows Pfizer to build a clear picture of departmental performance and identify areas for improvement.

Over 80% of the business is now using the Scorecard system, which Pfizer has estimated has helped to reduce unnecessary spend on processing payments by \$2 million.

As Ms Ziadie explains, "Thanks to the iCapella Scorecard solution reports are generated quicker, with greater ease and in far more depth. People are now looking at their business operations more closely to see

where efficiency savings can be made, particularly as the solution delivers detailed information in an easy-to-understand format. The ability to drill down into the system beneath the top level is an excellent feature that enables quick and simple, at-a-glance, viewing of the individual detail that makes up our business-critical reports."

Fast data matching

Following the success of the Scorecard system, and subsequent increase in efficiency, The iCapella Data Mart was extended to include a Bank Reconciliation system. Accurately matching data across Pfizer's millions of annual transactions is a crucial business activity that enables exact spend to be verified between ledger records and transactions passing through the bank. Pfizer's existing system was presenting difficulties with speed and availability of historical data, so Ariel built a Bank Reconciliation structure to enable the quick and simple matching of transactional data. Not only has this vastly improved the process, but archived information within the system gives users the additional benefit of finding instant transaction matches from past records.

Donna Kook, Supervisor of Cash Analysis and Alliance Accounting, said, "The Ariel system allows data to be prepared and tracked more efficiently. We've achieved a 50-70% time saving on major accounts using the system." The team have also found the Bank Reconciliation system has helped the wider organisation, as Ms Kook explains, "Questions from across the business about their transactions can now be answered quickly and accurately. The system works fabulously."

A true business partner

Beginning with the implementation of the Datamart, iCapella relationship with Pfizer is based on increasing the accessibility of data for business intelligence purposes, both simply and effectively. The Datamart now supports in excess of 5,000 different reports and applications used by NASS to increase the availability of BI.

Ms Ziadie said, "The iCapella Datamart fulfilled Pfizer's initial reporting need: however, the way in which the solution has evolved has exceeded all expectations. iCapella's proven capability and exceptional capacity for understanding the underlying needs of the business and our processes has led to a significant improvement in the way we handle data. Throughout our partnership iCapella has introduced new, more effective and productive methods of using the valuable business information we hold to our advantage - which will ultimately help the business to grow and develop, and enable us to provide a better service to our customers."

She concluded, "Our relationship with iCapella has been more than positive, with excellent support and customer service that is second-to-none. The Ariel team has a very hands-on approach, taking conceptual realities and translating them into technical solutions. They are true business partners."