



Costcutter

Costcutter build their sales cube 30 times faster using Microsoft SQL Server, Analysis and Reporting Services, Excel 2010 and Simpson Associates



Company Overview

Costcutter is one of the largest and most respected groups in the UK. From just seven stores in the York area, Costcutter has grown to encompass over 1,550 stores, supporting independent retailers and providing a world-class service. The Costcutter brand is instantly recognisable, standing for 'Fresh, Local, Value.'

Key Benefits

- Sales Analysis application now takes only 35 minutes to build.
- The application is more stable; the process is more reliable and less prone to fail.
- Microsoft SQL Server effectively provided free business intelligence.
- Existing users required no additional training.
- New users were able to use their Excel skills.
- An existing asset, SQL Server, was used to provide additional Return on Investment.

Craftsmen in paint and paper

Costcutter had a Sales Analysis application that was taking more than 18 hours to refresh, consequently it could only be run at weekends; resulting in two major issues:

1. If the build failed, then access to the latest sales figures would be delayed by over a week.
2. Updates had not been made for over five years, because the test process was time consuming and there was an increased likelihood that the build would fail in any case.

Simpson Associates proposed an enhanced solution based on Microsoft SQL Server, Analysis Services, Report Builder and Excel 2010. Costcutter continued to use their existing Business Intelligence tool as a front end, which provided additional analytical capabilities valued by a number of key users.

"Simpson Associates were determined to find the right solution for us. They helped us consider all technical options, but more fundamentally, helped us to solve a business problem."

Francis Barton, Head of IT

Approach

Simpson Associates provided a Solutions Architect to ensure that the project met the technical, commercial and organisational needs of the business and users.

Simpson Associates' solution was a low cost solution that was to offer a greater level of functionality than the existing Sales Analysis application, with significant improvements in performance and which would allow Costcutter to increase the adoption of their application and the data contained in there, by means of a familiar user interface.

Deliverables

A data mart was built in Microsoft SQL Server to extract data from the existing data warehouse and the existing legacy cube was mirrored in Microsoft Analysis Services.

Access to the data was granted to key, skilled users by IBM Cognos Powerplay, which negated the need for these users to re-train. However, the solution was delivered to others using Microsoft Excel 2010, a familiar user interface.

In addition, reports were written in Report Builder and deployed to users who can now extract this data themselves. This is functionality that had not been available before and was work that previously had to be completed by the IT department.

Built for speed and performance

1. The new Sales Analysis application takes only 35 minutes to refresh, so can be run multiple times a week.
2. The application is more stable; the process is more reliable and less prone to fail.
3. Changes made to the information can be made available to end users the same day.
4. Time has been saved in the IT department, by making more reporting functionality available to end users.
5. Preferences in terms of software have been catered for.
6. The infrastructure is more scalable than it was before.
7. Costcutter have a bespoke application support package in place to bridge a skills gap.



Support from Simpson Associates

Simpson Associates are specialists in defining, building and implementing information management solutions, which provide better business understanding and improved business management performance.

Our considerable skills and experience enable long-standing relationships with our clients and we have established long standing partner relationships with Microsoft, IBM and BOARD.

“The time it takes to build our sales cube has been reduced from 18 hours to only 35 minutes! This means that the cube can be refreshed more regularly and that changes can be made more reliably; our business has the information it needs, when it needs it.”

Francis Barton, Head of IT

Contact us

Should you have any questions or require any further information, the team at Simpson Associates will be happy to help you with your request.

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