

## Costcutter: Fresh data at an affordable price

Simpson Associates: **CASE STUDY**  
[www.simpson-associates.co.uk](http://www.simpson-associates.co.uk)

Simpson  
Associates

***Costcutter build their sales cube 30 times faster using Microsoft SQL Server R2, Analysis and Reporting Services, Excel 2010 and Simpson Associates Information Services Ltd.***

### Costcutter

Costcutter is one of the largest and most respected symbol 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. Proud to be Local, the Costcutter brand is instantly recognisable, standing for 'Fresh, Local, Value.'

### Problem

Costcutter had an unreliable Sales Analysis application that was taking in excess of 18 hours to refresh, so subsequently could only be run at weekends; the consequences of this were two-fold:

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 5 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 R2, Analysis Services, Report Builder and Excel 2010. Costcutter continued to use their existing Business Intelligence tool, which provided additional analytical capabilities valued by a number of key users.

### 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 therein, by means of a familiar user interface.

### Deliverables

A data mart was built in Microsoft SQL Server R2 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.

### Outcomes

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.

***"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

## Costcutter

Proud to be local

***"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

### Simpson Associates Information Services

Simpson Associates was established in 1991 and has a business philosophy built upon integrity and respect. We are proud to have many successful and long-standing relationships with our customers and partners including: Microsoft, IBM and BOARD.

We specialise in designing, managing, building and supporting Information Management applications for our customers within a wide range of industries, educational institutions and the public sector. Our approach to projects is always from the perspective of 'solution design' with the emphasis on our services and expertise, rather than on technology.

Our aim is to provide our customers with a better understanding of their business drivers and outputs so that their financial performance can be improved. We do not promote any one technology choice; rather we design solutions to specific business needs in the context that is most appropriate to each individual customer.

A crucial element is a close relationship between you as the customer and us as the supplier. You know the business need; we take the time to understand these requirements and to design an application that can be incorporated into your business practices. This is the key to a successful information management implementation.

### Consultancy Services

Our Consultancy Services team provides the resources to deliver our project engagements. This team consists of consultants who have expertise in the full range of Information Management disciplines including: Strategy Definition, Solutions Architecture, Data Warehousing, Business Intelligence, Collaboration, Scorecarding and Financial Budgeting, Forecasting and Consolidation.

**"The quality of Simpson Associates' staff and work is excellent."**

Dave Sandham, MISD Deputy Director, University of Cambridge

We can build teams using our own developers, your development team, or a combination of the two. We apply a structured approach to all of our project engagements and can incorporate elements of the MSP, PRINCE2 or Agile methodologies to ensure that there is sufficient control and governance in place to deliver successful projects and ROI.

**"This has been the best managed project that I have ever been involved with."**

Paul Hudson, IT Manager, Bostik

### Support Services

Our Support Services team provides software support services to customers that use IBM Cognos and Microsoft (SQL Server, Data Management and Business Intelligence) software. We are one of the largest independent IBM Cognos support providing partners and include a number of unique service offerings, including two hour call backs and issue resolution reports.

**"Your support team is always willing to go the extra mile."**

Toby Lester, Support Analyst, ACCO UK

### Training Services

We have a high success rate in transferring skills to our customers using experienced and accredited trainers. We design, build and deliver standard and bespoke training courses on key concepts or focussed on the IBM Cognos or Microsoft technologies. These may count towards certification programmes or can be tailored to the needs of end users or administrators.

**"Over 90% of the staff rated the course content, delivery and trainer as either Good or Excellent."**

Steve Turner, European Sales Training Manager, ACCO Brands

### 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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