

Apotex Leverages Panorama to Grow Sales



Company Profile

Apotex Inc. was founded in 1974, and is the largest Canadian-owned pharmaceutical company. From its 2 employees, 5,000 square foot beginning, the company has grown to employ over 6,800 people in research, development, manufacturing and distribution facilities world-wide. The Canadian operations of the Apotex Group of Companies with 5,800 employees now occupy over 3.4 million square feet in Montreal, Richmond Hill, Toronto, Etobicoke, Mississauga, Brantford, Windsor, Winnipeg, London, Calgary and Vancouver. Apotex produces more than 300 generic pharmaceuticals in approximately 4,000 dosages and formats which, in Canada, are used to fill over 85 million prescriptions a year - the largest amount of any pharmaceutical company in this country.

Business Challenge

Several years ago, the finance group at Apotex embarked on an initiative to find and deploy an easy-to-use yet powerful business analytics solution to increase their ability to answer the most important operational questions, namely:

- What products are being sold?
- Who is buying those products? and
- What are the profit margins by product and customer?

As with most SAP customers, the finance group used the standard tools available to them to perform the desired analytics. Reports could be generated that identified sales by product or by customer. Profitability reports could also be generated. However these reports were static and ineffective

for trend analysis and pinpointing operational issues, the team resorted to Microsoft Excel. Even with significant limitations, the team was able to obtain greater insight into the SAP data, and more importantly, understand what they needed, rather than what they were getting.

At this stage, the Apotex finance team met with a local Panorama partner – The Catalytics Group Inc. – who were able to develop a strong proof of concept using the Panorama BI Suite operating on the Microsoft platform. Apotex continued their work with Catalytics to execute on the desired solution using Panorama.

At the same time, the Apotex Information Technology group began a strategic deployment of SAP BW. IT approached finance to join the initiative, and a decision was reached to use the Panorama to design a corporate-wide solution using a single data source (namely the BW cubes and data stores). Once again, the finance group at Apotex turned to Catalytics to support the implementation of Panorama as the analytics and reporting solution for the SAP BW data source.

A critical decision in moving forward with Panorama was the ability to adhere to the strategic decision relating to a single data source. For many years the organization had been relying on Excel and Access to manage the business analytics function. Each department would extract data from SAP R/3 and place it in one of these tools. In some cases, the same data was being extracted by multiple people in the same team, or by different user groups. The manner in which the raw data was then manipulated and presented was dependent upon what story the group was trying to tell, rather than what the data itself was inherently “saying”.

When evaluating other alternatives, Apotex realized that most of the solutions do not natively integrate with SAP BW, but rather they add an additional layer for metadata and data extractions. Apotex knew what they wanted – standardization on SAP BW while getting the power of self-service analytics and reporting.

Key Features

The project undertaken by the finance team consisted of a number of key deliverables:

- The first user group of the Panorama BI Solution would be the finance team themselves. Data in the BW cubes and data stores represents a summary of financial transactions from Sales down through Gross Margin. Analysts in the finance team use this data to ensure that items have been correctly entered in SAP R/3, and to understand that trends and performance are meaningful from both a product and customer perspective.
- The second group to use this solution was department heads and their analysts. For this group, it was important to provide a more structured approach to analytics, and Catalytics used the power of the Panorama Performance Dashboard to provide structured analytics to this group. Dashboard pages have been defined that allow the users to see complementary analytics in a number of panes on a single dashboard screen. Data visualizations are a blend of crosstabs, charts and gauges, depending on the data and audience preferences. For example, a finance director might prefer crosstabs while a marketing manager might prefer charts. Dropdown selector boxes can be used to “slice” the data for specific products, customers or sales representatives.
- The third user group is arguably the most important: the Executive management group. Once again, the dashboard allows data to be analyzed and displayed in a highly controllable environment. Pages were tailored to reflect data that this group had become accustomed to seeing in monthly Executive Management presentations, with the new added benefit of being able to slice and dice the normally static presentation in ways that would assist with strategic execution.

Deployment Challenges

Since initially going live, the finance team has expanded their use of Panorama by incorporating it into the annual planning process. Budgets are prepared, reviewed, and loaded into SAP R/3. Prior to final submission and review at the executive level, departments are able to review their planned revenue and expenditures against historical results, and they are now also able to “slice” them against each product. Future initiatives will allow for review of certain data by customer, thereby allowing the Apotex to not only forecast and plan future product sales, but also anticipate which customers will buy which products. This will allow sales management to focus their attention on areas that will help them meet or exceed their sales plan.

A number of interesting things happened during the implementation of the Panorama BI solution:

- Work performed during the initial project using Microsoft technologies such as SQL Server and Analysis Services cubes was seamlessly migrated to the new dashboard environment. As data became available through the SAP BW platform, data views were replaced in the dashboard pages without users being made aware of the change. In some cases, pages consisted of data from both SAP BW and SQL Server Analysis Services, which was easily accomplished due to Panorama’s native integration with both platforms.
- During the initial design phase, user groups had determined that monthly data aggregations would be sufficient in terms of granularity, and IT then built the solution based on meeting that requirement. During deployment, however, it became apparent that certain constituents needed to see sales information by products on a daily basis. IT resources (as in most organizations) were strapped and could not undertake this modification in the time desired by the user community. Turning once again to Catalytics as their preferred Panorama consultancy, a short term solution was defined, created and deployed in under three weeks. Procedures were written to perform the required calculation to determine the daily data delta and store those values to a cube from which the data is then presented in dashboard pages.

Solution Highlights

- To date, the solution has proved versatile and robust, allowing for all user requirements to be met easily and in a controllable environment.
- Analysts can now focus on review and interpretation of analytics rather than in their preparation.
- Data can now be viewed from different perspectives, leading to more informed decision making.
- Well designed and defined dashboard pages provide a common, consistent view on data through the organization.
- Rich BI functionality satisfies the organizations need for deep and meaningful information.

Panorama Software

Panorama Software helps clients grow revenues and reduce costs by giving them the ability to analyze data, identify trends, maximize business opportunities, and improve corporate performance and results. Panorama software offers an intelligent, collaborative and easy-to-use, BI solution that enables enterprises the ability to gain insights more quickly, more efficiently and with greater relevancy. Panorama maintains over 1,600 global customers.

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