

Challenge

Enable European trade statistics provider to meet increasing customer demand for sophisticated explorable reports and data analysis at low cost and with minimal disruption

Solution

Databeacon Web Reporting and Data Analysis software seamlessly integrated with existing infrastructure

IT Infrastructure

FoxPro and SQL Server databases

Return on Investment

One-fifth the cost of competitive solutions

User Population

Computer literate (but not I.T.-oriented) marketing managers and business executives

Future Plans

Use Databeacon to reach Web-based global market

Industry

Trade statistics

Organization

Business & Trade Statistics Ltd.

Location

Surrey, United Kingdom

Web site

www.worldtradestats.com

DATABEACON DELIVERS INTERACTIVE EUROPEAN TRADE STATISTICS

“We’re no longer selling what just happened in the market. We’re now offering a strategic vision into where that market is going.”

The rise of the European Union and other trading blocs has dramatically increased trade and competition in Europe and worldwide. This trend has also spawned a competitive intelligence information industry. In the UK, that information – from the number of sirloins exported from Britain to Germany, to how much wine entered Holland from France – is very likely to be purchased from Ian Maclean.

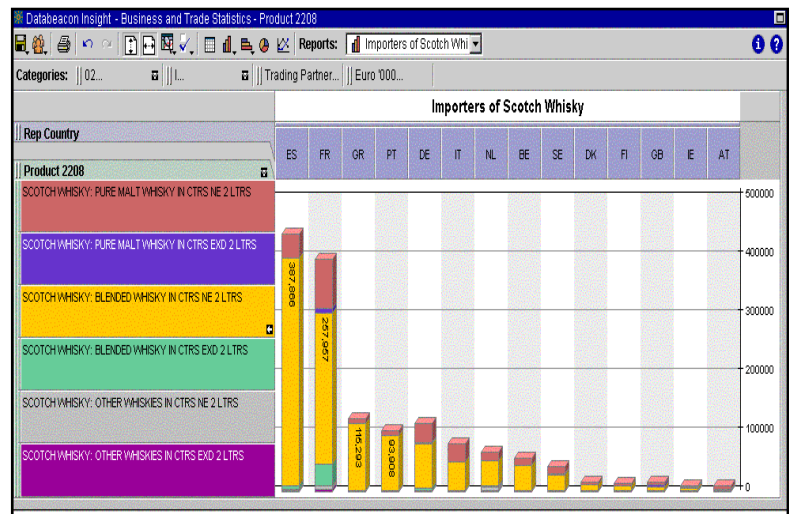
Maclean is founder and managing director of Business & Trade Statistics Ltd (BTS). BTS collects and markets customs data from the EU and most other developed nations, essentially tracking how much of what product crossed what border and when. It’s a daunting amount of data – some 10,000 different products, crossing 250 countries and all reported monthly. If you can get insight out of it, it’s strategic information that’s worth a lot of money. If you can’t, it’s just overload.

As both European and global trade volume explodes, Maclean, whose firm, until recently, presented its data as mere tables in either paper or PDF format, has found that “the market for simple, static reports is declining.”

But while BTS’s traditional business is in decline, a new opportunity has appeared. “There’s a growing market for sophisticated reporting and data analysis, he says. “Until recently that market has been filled by consultants who have been making a fortune analyzing and reselling our statistics.”

He cites a typical example of a UK consulting firm selling a report on citrus fruit exports to the Italian Chamber of Commerce. “They took £1,000 of our stats, re-worked the data to make it more clear, and sold the report for £20,000,” he says. “Now, by offering software-based reporting and analysis, that extra £19,000 can be ours.”

Today, BTS offers that software-based approach. But finding reporting and analysis software that worked on the Web where BTS customers expect to see and pay for their trade data turned out to be a challenge. The solutions of many vendors were simply too costly,



Clients no longer have to go to consultants to make sense of the data

generally more than five times Maclean’s £20,000 to £30,000 budget. The only product he found within his price range didn’t offer much functionality. Fortunately, Ian Maclean met John Caiger, who had a better idea.

Caiger is director of Matraxis Ltd, a Surrey-based consulting firm specialising in dynamic data publishing, analysis, reporting and web analytics. Caiger, who spent much of his career working for and then reselling software from

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Paris-based Business Objects, recalls when he and co-founder John Wood decided to open their own shop nearly two years ago.

“We needed a straightforward, easily understood product that didn’t cost much to implement,” he says. “It had to appeal to small-to-medium-sized companies, but still be able to hold its own for specific applications in large firms. And we wanted a software vendor willing to work hand-in-glove with a new company like ours.”

Caiger says over the years he’d heard good things about Databeacon and felt it could be the product he was looking for. After meeting the Databeacon partner support team and putting the reporting and analysis software through its paces, he was convinced to take on the product in the UK market. It’s a decision he has never regretted. “The relationship has worked out awfully well for us both from a product and a marketing support perspective,” he says.

According to Caiger, BTS is precisely the sort of client Matraxis looks for – an entrepreneurial company up against bigger competitors, wary of large costs and I.T. disruptions typically associated with reporting and analysis software projects.

“With just a couple of days consulting and a day’s training, we’ve set up a pilot project for them,” Caiger says. “Now they’re building interactive Databeacon reports offering self-serve analysis, including drill-down charts and graphs as well as ad hoc statistical functionality. Even at an early stage, it’s clear BTS and Databeacon are set to go far.”

Ian Maclean enthusiastically concurs. Using Databeacon’s dbPublish component to construct explorable reports from the underlying FoxPro database has proved to be smooth and painless. Initial customer reaction has surpassed expectations. And new marketing opportunities are already appearing.

“We have customers who’ve been feeding our data into old, proprietary analysis software,” he explains. “It’s ancient stuff, no longer supported, it’s constantly crashing and they’ve been looking around for something to replace it. Now, when we hear about that, we can just say ‘don’t bother, we’ll just give it to you in a Databeacon report’.”

The next project for BTS is a re-launched Web site designed to highlight the company’s new reporting and analysis capability. The company also plans to market ready-made data Databeacon reports to customers not simply within the UK, but around the world.

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“Databeacon’s functionality let us add significant value to our raw data,” Maclean says. “Our clients don’t need to go to consultants to make sense of what we offer.”

Maclean cites the case of another consultant who currently pays BTS £5,000 annually for trade statistics within the textile industry. The consultant simply repackages that data into manageable chunks and sells it as a static report to 20

different customers for £10,000 apiece.

But not for long. “Now, by publishing our data in explorable online Databeacon reports we can offer these people powerful analysis capability at a fraction of the cost of those static reports,” he says. “They can drill down into the data, they can extract the information they need, and by working interactively through the Databeacon graphical interface, they can discover new relationships between seemingly disparate pieces of data.”

“With Databeacon, our offering moves up the food chain,” says Ian Maclean. “We’re no longer selling a picture of what just happened in the market. We’re now offering a strategic vision into where that market is going. It’s the difference between yesterday’s news and tomorrow’s opportunity.”

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