

DATABEAACON HELPS COLOMBIA-BASED PROEXPORT CUT USER QUERY REQUESTS BY 90% WHILE DRASTICALLY REDUCING I.T. REPORT CREATION TIME

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Colombia is a major producer of textiles, apparel, live plants, furniture, chemicals, plastics, software and much more. At ProExport, our job is to promote Colombian products abroad and help domestic firms sell their goods into the competitive world market. We identify international opportunities for local businesses, analyze existing competition, develop strategies to penetrate external markets, and create customized action plans to help firms adapt to the international marketplace. We also bring together entrepreneurs, commercial promoters and investors, and assist foreign firms wishing to source Colombian goods.

With offices all over the country and around the world, we faced the challenges of sharing data, providing updates, and increasing the speed of data analysis between our offices. We had so much information to manage that we found ourselves with four basic problems:

- How could we deploy massive amounts of information to everyone in the organization?
- With data constantly being updated, how could we ensure that everyone had access to the latest information?
- How could we provide intuitive reporting and data analysis tools to the whole organization?
- How could we track our clients' exporting results and measure our performance and impact?

Until last year, we struggled with a hodge-podge of custom analysis tools, static HTML reports and SQL server databases. Then we turned to ISI, a business-consulting firm that represents Databeacon web reporting and data analysis software in Colombia in association with Abaco. Working with ISI, we put the major business intelligence applications through a grueling evaluation process and put Databeacon head-to-head with all the big players - Microsoft, Cognos, Beyond 20/20, Microstrategy, and Business Objects. Databeacon emerged as the clear winner.

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The deciding factor for us was that Databeacon was clearly designed from the beginning as a Web-based application. The other tools, even the ones that worked quite well, had obviously been migrated from a client/server architecture, which created problems with scaling and licensing. Databeacon scales very easily and the licensing structure is designed for a large and growing number of users so when we expand exponentially, we won't need to worry about exponentially escalating costs.

Implementation of the software was very smooth and uncomplicated. When we rolled it out across our organization, our people found it extremely easy to use. In fact, once they experienced the Databeacon application, everyone was very happy to discard our old processes.

Before implementing Databeacon software, we relied on two systems engineers to gather, consolidate, and publish information for analysis. Serving our four regional offices and 14 international offices, the engineers worked on producing data reports three days a week. Typically, they received approximately 10 query requests a day from a total of 50 individual users. To process a query and publish a single report was time consuming, ranging from two to eight hours for each query. The process also left more than 50 corporate users unattended.

With Databeacon's Internet-based software technology, we were able to significantly reduce the reporting time and expand the service from fifty to 140 corporate users. Using Databeacon, individual users are able to immediately view, analyze, and publish their own data reports without input from our IT staff. We've seen a

90 percent drop in the number of query requests, drastically reducing the hours required our engineers dedicated to publishing reports.

We were also pleasantly surprised by how quickly our staff was able to get up to speed on using Databeacon software. Compared to other BI solutions, Databeacon is much more intuitive, which meant we didn't have to spend a large amount of time or money training our employees. In fact, we were able to train 158 new users in just 64 hours, which is not typical when you introduce new reporting and analysis technologies. Our staff quickly grasped the basic functions and began developing customized data reports almost immediately.

Our managers have started to use Databeacon to analyze market sector trends, follow up on new business opportunities, and analyze information collected through our CRM system. Web reporting and data analysis have helped us to improve our processes, reducing time spent in measuring our impact in Colombian non-traditional exports and in employment generation, according to our commitment with National Government. The solution has also provided our analysts with an easy and more dynamic way to identify and follow up on our business opportunities.

For other companies who are looking for an answer to their web reporting and data analysis challenges, I think the best suggestion is for them to not just look at what their present needs are, but think in terms of the future and make sure the technology and vendor they select will be able to accommodate the changing needs of the company.



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