At a glance

Industry
Food Services

Solution
QlikView

Function
Distributor of frozen, chilled and dry foods, fresh fruit and vegetables, paper and packaging, confectionery and chemical goods.

Location
Western Australia

Business Objective
To improve business decision making and profitability, by having easier access to critical information about the company's financial, inventory and distribution activities.

Business Benefits
Instantaneous information and analyses that allows greater identification of errors and more control over margins.

Goldline Distributors (Goldline) is a Western Australian owned and operated foodservice wholesaler and distributor situated in The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, 600kms east of Perth.

Since 2000, the company has been serving a diverse range of businesses and consumers, in Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the surrounding areas of Kambalda, Coolgardie, Menzies, Leonora and Laverton. It carries an extensive product range including frozen, chilled and dry foods, fresh fruit and vegetables, paper and packaging, confectionery and chemical goods.

Goldline has grown rapidly in size and geography, spurred on by ambitious strategies and periodic acquisitions. Throughout, Managing Director, Mark Gray, has made smart use of information technologies to provide a solid basis for decision making and to maximise efficiencies. In 2008, for example, the company engaged Professional Advantage to

deploy Microsoft Dynamics GP, creating an enterprise financial platform capable of managing current business and predicted future growth.

"Basically I could sit on QlikView and save myself money every day."

Discovering business truths

More recently, Gray decided to seek a business intelligence (BI) and analytics solution that would enable him to analyse the company's financial, inventory and distribution activities in greater depth. He wanted to quickly and easily create consolidated and individual location-based views of debtors, creditors and cash flow reports, and to compare budgets and forecasts. He also wanted to be able to monitor the performance of different Goldline locations, analyse customer behaviour, identify and understand sales and margin trends, and see where and why the organisation might be experiencing lost sales.

Gray recognised that some of this information would be extremely helpful, providing greater profitability and visibility for his business.

"I wanted to protect my investment in assets," Gray asserts.

He selected QlikView, a leading BI solution that offered full integration with Microsoft Dynamics GP. To deploy the solution, he turned once again to Professional Advantage.

Gray briefed Professional Advantage about the information he required and a consultant quickly began developing the application to suit. New financial reports and a forecasting ability were developed. For the inventory and distribution part of the business, a sales trend analysis was created, along with reports identifying customer sales data, lost sales opportunities, item categorisations, sales margin analyses, and basked analyses to identify the impact of promotions on sales. There was also a report to support claims for vendor rebates and promotions.

Immediate visibility

Gray estimates Goldline's previous manual spreadsheet approach to reporting required the equivalent of one person, one and a half days per week. "I was spending a lot of time preparing financial and cash flow reports as well. Now I have more time on my hands because I can literally look at this stuff wherever I am, at home or work,– and monitor what's going on."

He gives the example of a monthly report series, listing sales by customer, product, and supplier. Historically, this would have required office staff working their way through Microsoft Dynamics GP to look at sales of particular items during the specified date range. They would have had to print invoices and add it all up before collating the information in a spreadsheet.

"It was an incredibly hard thing to do manually. We could easily have someone sitting there all day on that basis. With QlikView, we can do most of these reports within five minutes flat. It's a huge time saving," Gray notes.

In early 2013, Gray used QlikView to analyse sales margin trends and discovered a downturn of minus one per cent over the previous year. He says, "QlikView allowed us to see why, to understand what costs have gone up and as a result, we've been able to adjust our prices accordingly. So now we've fixed the situation and we are growing our margin again. If we'd had to analyse this manually, the amount of time required would have been extraordinary. In our game, when dealing with fast moving products, we can't afford that kind of time to sit around."

Today, Gray has two staff who help him keep a very close eye on the data being generated within QlikView. "We look at a raft of things across categories, by item or customer. At first glance it might seem as though we are getting a great margin out of a particular product until we drill in and look at individual customers. Then we may find that someone is getting a much cheaper deal for no particular reason. We find we can pick up errors very easily. Basically I could sit on QlikView every day and save myself money."

Looking ahead

Goldline has now begun rolling out a new radio frequency identification (RFID) solution in its warehouses. There's a long way to go before the project is complete, but Gray is already preparing to use QlikView to provide all the back end reporting. He's hoping to use the information to learn more about picking speed at each location, to identify picking errors and carry out in depth cost analyses.

Further down the track he's keen to use QlikView to explore human resources-related functions such as annual leave and individual productivity. "We currently use external reports and suppliers for payroll, but a lot of those reports are [Microsoft] Excel based and could be run through QlikView. The more we see achieved with QlikView, the more ideas we get," he smiles.

"From where we started in 2000 until now, all our requirements have changed dramatically, and they're likely to keep changing as we expand. We're coming up against pressures from all sorts of angles on the business, be it logistics, freight, people, or managing our remote locations. The devil is in the detail.

"I have a keener eye on the business now because of QlikView. The information is instantaneous. I can see what we are doing. I can drill down and see information that in the past, I wouldn't have been aware of. I can predict more accurately where we are going. QlikView illuminates the darkest corners of my business," Gray admits.

About us

Professional Advantage is one of Australia's most awarded solutions providers, with over 20 years experience in helping organisations improve their business systems through industry leading software solutions. Our 250-strong team in 6 offices across Australia and internationally has successfully worked with over 1000 organisations.

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