



## At a glance

### Industry

Not for profit

### Solution

- QlikView Business Intelligence
- Microsoft Dynamics GP

### Challenges

- Heavy reliance on IT
- Limited data analysis capabilities and presenting of information
- No timely access to information
- Data from multiple sources

### Benefits

- Data reconciled to the general ledger, to allow data confidence for operational and finance department heads.
- Easy insight into purchase order information, with drill-down capabilities such as who requested the order, who approved it, etc.
- Enhanced visibility of events data.
- Reduction in effort to compile month-end management reports for the finance department.

## Royal Agricultural Society of NSW takes control of its events with QlikView

For more than 190 years, the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) has been a powerful advocate for the development of agriculture in Australia. The not for profit society uses events, competitions and educational activities to encourage agricultural excellence and sustainable development of agriculture in New South Wales.

The society's flagship event is the Sydney Royal Easter Show, which attracts more than 800,000 visitors annually. The organisation also hire out its award winning venue, the Sydney Showground, which is used by major events ranging from the Big Day Out music festival, to sporting fixtures such as V8 motor car racing and AFL games.

RAS employs 140 staff on a permanent basis throughout the year, rising by another 700 casual staff and up to 500 volunteers during the peak Easter Show period.

*"Using QlikView, we spend less time doing transactional activities, and less time is required to prepare reports. This is giving us more time to invest in analysis, providing greater opportunity for us to focus on more value-add tasks, compared to just gathering data."*

## Reporting limitations keep costs hidden

Prior to 2012, preparing a profit and loss (P&L) report for an event at the RAS required alot of data manipulation. The organisation had been using Microsoft Dynamics GP as its general ledger for some years, but it also captured essential data in a number of other systems including an Ungerbroek event management and sales application.

For meaningful reports and analysis, the organisations had to rely on a SQL data warehouse tool to extract information from both the finance and event management systems. RAS Financial Controller, Ronald Lee, describes the process as cumbersome, saying, "We relied heavily on IT support. It also limited us in terms of analysing data or presenting information in a different format. Viewing it as KPIs was not that simple and because of the process, the reports were not in real time. This was a real problem when running events as the information we were viewing was not always current. Because of all of this, over time, upkeep fell behind so we began to find some data integrity issues. Eventually we decided we needed a real time system that could give us an up to date view of how an event was performing, especially its P&L."

Ron approached the IT partner that had deployed RAS' Microsoft Dynamics GP finance system, Professional Advantage, for advice about an alternative approach to business analytics.

Having worked together for almost ten years, RAS and Professional Advantage have a long history of conducting successful projects. "We're still working with the same group of people. They know the RAS business and know how they can add value, rather than selling us something for the sake of a sale. Having this knowledge about our requirements is a lot more effective than engaging a new consultant," Ron explains.

Professional Advantage recommended leading business intelligence platform, QlikView. When they gave a demonstration of QlikView functionality, Ron was soon sold. "I realised what it was capable of, then looked at our requirements of the project. Because we are a not for profit, we always have to be careful of how we spend money. By talking to the people at Professional Advantage, I realised the possibilities and saw that the functionality was far superior to our SQL solution. That's when we decided to go for QlikView."

### Tight scope, fast deployment

The project was tightly scoped and given just three months to go live. "This was possible because we knew exactly what we wanted" Ron says. "We needed to be able to see costs in real-time and to drill down to the purchase order level. To make sure all purchase orders have been raised and that any costs recoverable are being recovered."

Unsurprisingly, the accounting team immediately embraced the new reporting system. Other managers focused on their own cost centres and received training so they could



understand how to best use the new tool. What they discovered was a system that married purchase orders to not just expense codes, but also event codes enabling them to ensure costs are being managed and allocated correctly. Unplanned or excess expenditure became more readily recognisable and managers found themselves better able to track costs against a specific project or initiative.

### On demand reporting

There are now more than 50 users at RAS who regularly access QlikView, including department/cost centre managers and accounts staff. Managers check QlikView to see how the cost centre is tracking through the month, viewing live data rather than having to wait until end of the month.

*"In the past, event data was captured in the event system, and then downloaded into Excel. Pulling out all the relevant data from our event management system and Microsoft Dynamics GP took about one or two days per month. Now it's available live."*

The new system has helped encourage all staff to raise purchase orders quickly whenever committing to an expense.

"We have a very big spike of activity in the months leading up to the Easter Show," Ron explains. "One of the key requirements at that time is for accounts to ensure all purchase orders are raised before we procure services or purchase goods. If a manager has budgeted for certain



activities and if the actual expenditure appears to be too low, they can now query whether a purchase order has been raised. If expenses appear too high, they have time to consider how to bring the activity back into budget. They now have time to manage their costs and to ultimately spend more wisely. This is proving to be very useful in terms of managing our costs," he says.

*"Another benefit of QlikView is the fact that all users are certain of looking at the same information. Historically, when everyone relied on Excel reports, version control was difficult. QlikView has changed this, providing information consistency for all."*

### The future

At present, QlikView is primarily used to manage budget data, allowing users to compare actual expenditure to budgets.

In time, Ron hopes to expand the use of QlikView to include forecasting, budgeting and more. "I'd like to get to a stage where QlikView reaches into different systems to access non-financial data. For example, when we hire out a venue for different events we ought to know the utilization and booking data. Down the track I would like to develop some kind of personal dashboard so managers can view KPIs, and see how they're being measured and tracked," Ron says.

When asked to comment on the effectiveness of the deployment, Ron pauses then concludes, "I like QlikView. It meets our business requirements. Using it, we spend less time doing transactional activities, and less time is required to prepare reports. This is giving us more time to invest in analysis, providing greater opportunity for us to focus on more value-add tasks, compared to just gathering data."





## Enabling *High Performance* Workplaces

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### About Professional Advantage

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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