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Super Group first in SA to install ProfitBase

The JSE-listed Super Group, South Africa's largest supply chain management business, has become the first company in South Africa to implement ProfitBase, the rapidly deployable business intelligence (BI) offering from the Norwegian company of the same name.

The solution was implemented at Super Group Industrial Products (SGIP), an importer and distributor of world-class commercial vehicles and industrial equipment products. Commercial vehicles and capital infrastructure-related equipment are at the heart of SGIP's core business.

As a consequence of installing ProfitBase, Super Group has its first BI solution in place, and it expects greater, standardised visibility into its operations across two continents.

Prior to the implementation of ProfitBase, which has been delivered on the back of an existing Microsoft infrastructure, SGIP had no BI or data analysis capability. Reports were largely defined, delivered and interpreted in Microsoft Excel. This carries a significant risk in that there is no single, uncontested view of the truth when it comes to boardroom discussions.

Complicating the issue was the fact that SGIP had merged multiple ERP systems into one custom system, Autoline.

But business was impatient, and demanded a new, centralised view of corporate information.

Finally, there was the powerful strategic positioning from CIO Walter da Cruz: "As a rule, we must never be dependent on one person, company or proprietary system."

Da Cruz had identified that SGIP needed a data warehouse, and opted to build and design it in line with the industry-standard Ralph Kimball approach.

"We requested an opportunity to do a proof of concept," says Reinald Bormann, sales executive at Harvey Jones. "SGIP accepted our proposal, and opted for ProfitBase because of the product's low price, its promise of quick delivery, and its best fit against the company's BI mission statement."

Harvey Jones fulfilled against mandate: the data warehouse was delivered in six weeks after the initial data and resourcing issues were resolved, going live in mid-April. Multidimensional cubes were built for finance, sales, debtors and parts. These cubes run against the ProfitBase data warehouse.

"We had outstanding assistance from ProfitBase in Norway, and worked intensely with SGIP to impart on-the-job training to staff on the ground," adds Bormann.

SGIP is already reaping a number of benefits:

- Custom mapping from source to target, which confers easy adaptability.
- Flexibility in management of dimensions.
- Rapid development of cubes, as there is no star schema.
- Reuse of intellectual property, which will serve as the foundation for all future BI projects.

"We learnt some vital lessons in delivering the data warehouse," notes Bormann. "The first was to minimise the number of business users involved. The second was that analysis up-front remains an absolute necessity. The third was to have clear role definitions in the project team. The fourth was that you have to use just the right products to deliver information to end-users. We did this using a range of Microsoft tools.

"Given all of these, Harvey Jones and Super Group have delivered on the promise of Quick BI."

"With an open-minded and creative approach, we got ProfitBase to build the cubes according to our initial requirements, says Da Cruz."

Contact

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