

## Ahlers AG analyzes the complete supply chain with QlikView

“ QlikView has surprised us in a positive way in every respect: its performance has more than fulfilled our expectations. At the same time, setting it up and using it was extremely easy and adaptable. ”

*Uwe Dubbert, Manager IT/Telecom Group, Ahlers AG*

The clothing industry is one of the most important sectors in the German consumer goods market. Ahlers AG, one of the most famous suppliers, producing and retailing clothing since 1919, is based in Herford and has been listed on the stock exchange since 1987. Today, with a turnover of about €250 million, the company is one of the leading manufacturers of men's clothing in Europe. Its brands include Gin Tonic,

pany must have efficient management and control over production, storage and sales. To maintain this management control, business data must be provided quickly and precisely as an essential basis for sound decision making.

Decision-makers expect real-time answers to the most varied questions: how are the sales of individual product categories trending? Globally or by regions? Where are there variations in the sales planning and what reasons are revealed by the sales data – for example, in comparison with other sales areas? What colors or sizes of a certain model range sell comparatively poorly? What is the optimum quantity of stock at the point of sale? What product assortment considerations must be included in the strategic planning of the next collection? Is the assortment of the color and size ranges appropriate?

Product planning presents big challenges in the area of men's clothing, because more than 50 sizes for the same model demands the most precise planning from manufacturers. In addition, the number of collections has also drastically increased and have a direct impact on the demands in manufacturing, job order production and purchasing abroad – all leading to a very complex and sophisticated supply chain.

To meet these information requirements, a business intelligence solution was the only logical step for Ahlers. A



Pioneer, Jupiter and Andy Jllien as well as the noble brands Baldessarini, Otto Kern and Pierre Cardin.

An instinct for trends, good design and high-quality products are required for a company to have long term success in the marketplace and to withstand strong global competitive pressures. Also increasing vertical integration places additional challenges on companies within the industry. To exploit these trends as opportunities, a com-

### Solution Overview

#### Ahlers AG

During 80 years of its existence, the second largest manufacturer of men's clothing in Europe has proved that it can always react flexibly and quickly to the requirements of the time and of the market.

#### Industry

Consumer Products

#### Function

Sales, Supply Chain, Operations, IT

#### Geography

Germany

#### Challenges

- Take advantage of new sales concepts and changes in market conditions
- Efficient management of production, storage and sales to ensure a presence in the market in the long term
- Aggregate and analyze data from the most varied sources with fast results, even in the case of large data volume

#### Solution

Ahlers deployed QlikView to nearly 20 users very quickly. With QlikView, Ahlers is now able to manage the demand chain and gain greater visibility to efficiently manage its supply chain to adapt to meet the ever changing buying patterns. With QlikView Server (64-bit), Publisher and Connector, Ahlers is able to unlock and manage the invaluable data that resides across a wide array of systems including SAP.

#### Benefits

- Analyzed large volumes of data with response times of under one second
- Gained increased visibility and control across management, supply chain and sales
- Provided platform for fast, flexible analyses that allows for and adapts to any ad-hoc inquiries to meet the unique information requirements of each department
- Consolidated data from wide array of different sources

#### Data Source Systems

Application: WP-Dress, pdm.assyst, FuturERS, SAP, P&ILOGA  
Hardware: IBM System i (AS400)

business analysis solution was needed to bring together and evaluate the data from different sources, such as the ERP System, WP-Dress, the product data management systems, pdm.as-syst, the retail application, FuturERS, SAP programs for the areas of finance and control, and the human resource management software, P&I LOGA. In addition, it was important for Ahlers to be able to flexibly look at the data from different analysis perspectives – without the need for these to be pre-configured by IT.

Another requirement consisted of making available specific analyses to top management, to logistics and to the sales team – for example, concerning the situation of a single sales area or product model in order to be able to control the business proactively around product assortment.

Ahlers started with a traditional OLAP tool. However, very quickly, the users faced problems with the solution and were not able to easily solve their information needs. The traditional OLAP tool presented many shortcomings with its ability to manage high volumes of data, flexible analysis with evaluated dimensions, and speed and performance. Ahlers sought out a replacement solution in QlikView that could address these needs. QlikView showed its strengths,

but particularly with its capabilities to manage high volumes of data – with response times under one second. Furthermore, the flexibility in data analysis provided by QlikView has inspired Ahlers with its broad applications. So, for example, the product managers may be able to compare sales figures with each other, from different perspectives, such as the end-customer sales across different sales channels. For this purpose, data from WP Dress and FuturERS must be collated and evaluated.

Even the IT department itself could benefit from using QlikView: the Ahlers Group uses the i5 550 system (formerly AS/400) of IBM. For cost reasons the company decided on the “Standard Edition” – however, this lacks interactive capabilities. The advantages for IT in the “good old AS/400 times” were the ability to create some database or operating system functions such as Query and SQL, in order to clear error situations, or to create special evaluations at short notice. “Quick data analyses are a specialty of QlikView, so that, we can do without many individual SQL and Query inquiries,” explained Dubbert. “Besides, QlikView offers us additional advantages in the structure and management of queries. Nevertheless, earlier i5 operating system functions led to some “uncontrolled growth” and accordingly to the lack of data clarity.” In addition,



analyses and reports of the internal IT operations also run through QlikView – for many companies a quite difficult and challenging endeavor.

“We wanted a system that converts data quickly and precisely from a huge number of sources into powerful information, a system which delivers answers to questions from different areas of the business,” explained Uwe Dubbert, Manager IT/Telecom Services of the Ahlers Group. “With QlikView, at short notice and without great effort, we can adapt the queries to the information requirements of the individual departments. After their negative experiences with the OLAP technology, my colleagues involved in the QlikView projects from the IT/Telecom department were delighted with the potential of QlikView and with its performance data.”

“ We were impressed by how soon QlikTech set up a sample application which we could use independently for the first analysis, completely free of problems. ”

*Uwe Dubbert, Manager IT/Telecom Group, Ahlers AG*