

A singular view with QlikView improves performance at Blyth HomeScents

“Everybody's on the same page talking from the same numbers. Using QlikView has become a way of life in our company.”

Martina Latimer, Manager of Business Intelligence, Blyth HomeScents International

Company background

Blyth HomeScents International (BHI) is a consumer products business, primarily focused on fragranced products and related accessories that are sold globally. Brands include Colonial Candle™®, Carolina® and Florasense®.



The company tailors its selection of products, designs, packaging and prices to satisfy the varying demands of its consumers. Products are distributed through department and independent gift stores, specialty retail chains and mass merchandisers.

BHI's goal is to have the right brand at the right price in the right retail store. The company's powerful and flexible analysis applications – using QlikView – play an essential part in meeting that goal.

Before: Too much of everything – and too late

BHI's products are seasonal, and sales can vary widely among regions and countries. The company's manual approach to reporting and analysis was grossly inefficient – and hampered BHI's growth.

The lack of visibility in sales performance caused tremendous frustration. Multiple reports came from a myriad of sources – executives had to determine which report had the relevant numbers, rather than focus on the numbers themselves. And by the time actual sales were reported for the previous month, it was too late to make necessary adjustments with suppliers or shift promotional programs. Marketing couldn't gauge the sell-through of product lines. The company accumulated significant excess-and-obsolete (E/O) inventory. These issues directly impacted BHI's bottom line.

Enter QlikView: From demo to dashboard in three weeks

Oleg Troyansky, Director for Application Services at BHI, North America, came across QlikView when he looked for a business intelligence solution that would integrate with BHI's AS/400 based Movex and BPCS ERP systems.

Pulling sales data together from their two separate ERP systems, Troyansky

Solution Overview

Blyth HomeScents International

Leading consumer products business, primarily focused on fragranced products and related accessories

Industry

Consumer Products

Function

Sales, Marketing, Supply Chain, Finance

Geography

USA

Challenges

- Improve speed and quality of decision making by eliminating highly manual reporting processes
- Consolidate enterprise data from merged divisions using different data source systems
- Enable developer and end-users with analysis solution that is easy to use and flexible to accommodate evolving needs

Solution

Blyth HomeScents deployed QlikView to over 200 employees across 4 functional areas, with the first application up and running in 3 weeks. With QlikView pulling data from Movex and BPCS on the IBM AS/400 platform, Blyth HomeScents analyzes retail point-of-sales performance, inventory levels, product performance and financial results – all focused on driving revenue and reducing costs. With QlikView Server (64-bit) and Publisher, Blyth HomeScents can effectively manage security and visibility requirements while handling massive amounts of data.

Benefits

- Reduced excess and obsolete inventory costs by 98%
- Increased channel loyalty to ensure higher future sales
- Improved sales personnel adoption through ease-of-use
- Alleviated stress on IT staff by reducing quantity of ad hoc report requests

Data Source Systems

Application: Lawson (M3), BPCS
Database: RDBMS, Flat Files, Excel
Hardware: IBM System i (AS/400)

BLYTH

designed, developed and implemented a single sales performance analysis application with QlikView. Managers could analyze sales data by brand, channel and sales organization, and compare performance against both forecasts and prior year.

Just three weeks after BHI purchased and installed QlikView, BHI's executive team was looking at their first dashboard. "For the first time, the executives were able to really see the business through the analysis. It was a dramatic shift," he said.

Rather than having to commit to a large budget implementation, BHI was able to pick a particular application area and deploy it – ensuring that the product fit with the company's business requirements, and that the process for deploying it worked – before moving on to new analysis areas. This "one piece at a time" approach was impossible with traditional BI products, but works with QlikView.

Now everything can be measured

The initial focus was simply to provide better sales analysis – something that BHI accomplished within the first month. "Senior management quickly came to see our business intelligence initiative as a strategic system that is a source of competitive advantage," said Martina Latimer, Manager of Business Intelligence.

BHI easily expanded that initial sales application so that financial performance can be analyzed from a variety of dimensions. BHI tracks sales weekly against each individual sales rep's goal and the company's financial budgets, and updates annual sales projections on a rolling quarter basis. This translates to the company's return on sales, return on net operating assets and cash flow figures. Margins are gauged on the dashboard as well, with drill-downs to find where specific cost increases lie.

QlikView has enabled BHI to use business performance management to compare sales performance by brand,

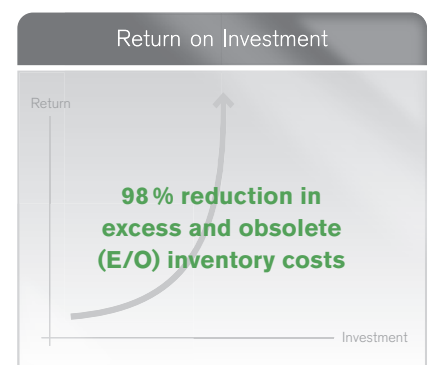
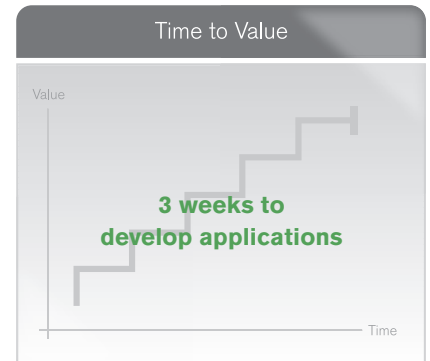
channel and geography to the sales plan. They can also manage finished goods and raw material inventory levels. Since E/O inventory was such a hotspot, the company started tracking inventory against sales on a weekly basis. At that time, the company was challenged with more obsolete inventory than planned.

A carefully analyzed product launch yields customer loyalty

The company launched its revamped Carolina line of candles last year. As a result of measuring the performance of its new product line, BHI unexpectedly gained greater customer loyalty. IT assigned specific item IDs in the ERP system for Carolina "old" and Carolina "new." According to Latimer, it took 10 minutes to get a side-by-side comparison application of brand against brand in QlikView. (BHI tracked this for a full year and the "new" Carolina outsold the "old.")

By getting a few test customers' EDI information, the retail Point-of-Sale (POS) application also analyzed the "new" Carolina brand's sell-through. "Measuring the sales going out the door of the store is more important strategically than just measuring our sales to the channel," said Latimer. The resulting information was powerful.

QlikView empowers users to make the right decisions at any time and puts knowledge at their fingertips wherever they are. Analysis can be taken entirely off-line on a laptop and remains fully functional. That makes sales reporting much more efficient. Because of this "pack-and-go" capability, combined with a quick to learn and easy to use design, the sales reps embraced QlikView. They bring their laptops to the customers to show them their point-of-sales data, including their inventory turns and margins. "We know which products are selling – sometimes even better than the customer does," said Latimer. BHI's sales representatives use the information as a competitive advantage to strengthen customer loyalty – and increase future sales.

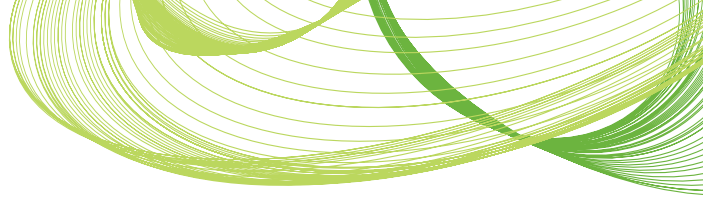


The ability to know – and show – customers their POS information has been powerful. "It has totally changed our relationship with them; they can trust us when we tell them they need more of a certain product," said Latimer.

QlikView simplifies analysis for everyone

Unlike some large company projects – where the two-year mark represents the finish line for the initial implementation and rollout – and the beginning of the end-user complaints, BHI has had production analysis applications in place for two full years.

Last year, Troyansky and Latimer extended their reach, implementing QlikView Sales Analysis for The Sterno Group, another division of Blyth. Like before, The Sterno Group was able to analyze sales by channel, brand and sales hierarchies – within just a few weeks – leveraging existing infrastructure and an existing model. Currently, Latimer is working on implementing inventory analysis for The Sterno Group.



QlikView integrates ETL capability, data storage, multi-dimensional analysis and a graphically-based end-user presentation layer – providing all the tools a company needs to deploy powerful business intelligence, analytics and reporting for just a fraction of the cost of a more traditional full data warehouse/business intelligence implementation.

BHI's QlikView applications draw from relational data sources, Excel spreadsheets and flat files. Further, the applications update data from operational sources at whatever rate is appropriate to the information needed. While the

bulk of BHI's data is refreshed daily, in some cases the refresh is monthly, some weekly, and some every half hour.

QlikView's click driven, visually interactive interface gives users instant access to top-level metrics and record level detail, revealing unanticipated insights hidden in operational systems. "We have to make better, smarter, faster decisions," said Paul Fribert, BHI's CIO. He, Troyansky and Latimer have a clear vision of how to unlock those hidden insights.

Rapid application development allows users to see something first, in order to

get them on the right path, according to Latimer. "It's very easy. Within a couple of hours, we can get a prototype in front of a user and expand from there. Our end users think the information appears 'automagically' – that data goes into 'never-never-land' and automatically just appears. But the reality is that QlikView does it for them. With the ability to measure unlimited dimensions, you control the outcome," said Latimer. End users are able to use QlikView applications in minutes, resulting in fast deployment and reduced costs. Once familiar with the benefits of QlikView, users find it hard to work without them.

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Martina Latimer, Manager of Business Intelligence, Blyth HomeScents International

