

Fleura builds knowledge paradise using information from QlikView

“ Now we can easily disclose data, drill down to detail level, and gain new insights. ”

Casper de Groot, Financial Director, Fleura

Fleura Export B.V. was established in 1970 and is one of the largest Dutch importers and exporters of cut flowers and cut foliage. Its headquarters and wholesale warehouse are based in Aalsmeer, The Netherlands. The group achieves a large part of its sales through a tight network of 46 of its own branches with a predominantly Cash & Carry function. Through this proven and powerful concept Fleura has been market leader for many years in Germany and The Netherlands; and the expansion is continuing with Austria, Italy, Poland and the Czech Republic opening up new

subsidies and sales offices in various countries, a range of operations and different IT systems, its organizational structure is rather complex. Increasingly, this was impacting the company's course of business. "Due partly to the fast growth our information provision had turned into chaos with scores of Excel reports and emails complicating the management of the company. That's why, in early 2006, we started looking for a Business Intelligence (BI) solution with a consolidation tool for our financial reports and a reporting tool for our buying subsidies to replace the obsolete Oracle solution we were using. To meet both objectives simultaneously we preferred one central solution which would transform our 'dispersed knowledge paradise' into a 'unified knowledge paradise'," explains Casper de Groot, Fleura's Financial Director.

"After asking around in the market and browsing the Internet for some time we compiled a shortlist of two BI solutions: Cognos and QlikView – both of which met our requirements. We wanted a cutting-edge product which would be easy to use, fast to implement and self-explanatory, therefore requiring no extensive training given the complex structure of our organization. Furthermore, it had to enable us to develop applications fast without involving external BI consultants or our technology department. Cognos proved no match for QlikView. Although the consolidation feature was lacking in QlikView, we opted for the solution as we expected to be able to develop this

markets. The transport organization, consisting of 75 drivers, ensures that the products are delivered daily, on time and cooled. Fleura employs over 700 people and generates annual sales of around €200 million.

"Freedom of movement"

Whilst Fleura is made up of many branches and a transport organization, it is managed centrally. With buying

Solution Overview

Fleura

Flower exporter and wholesaler, market leader in The Netherlands and Germany

Industry

Retail & Wholesale Distribution

Function

Executive, Finance, Operations, Human Resources

Geography

The Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Austria and Italy

Challenges

- Consolidate various financial reports
- Replace the operational information system at the purchase organization
- Integrate dispersed business data in one solution

Solution

Fleura deployed three QlikView applications to 12 employees. With QlikView, the exporter/wholesaler now analyzes customers, products, stocks, prices, and sales – all focused on driving corporate profitability. With QlikView Server (64-bit), Fleura easily supports security and visibility while handling the large data volume of nearly 1 billion records and gaining up-to-date insight into business performance.

Benefits

- Provides a decentralized organization with a central solution
- Empowers non-IT-professionals to build applications rapidly
- Enables users to drill down into information details
- Stimulates users to work independently

Data Source Systems

Application: MS Excel, MS Navision/
MS Dynamics, Exact, KBT
Pro (formerly Palm), ADP
Database: MS SQL Server 2000,
Oracle 9.2



functionality ourselves based on our in-house expertise. With hindsight we can say a disadvantage turned into a benefit as standard functionality would have limited our 'freedom of movement' and hence our flexibility."

Happy faces

In the Fall of 2006 Fleura started implementing QlikView. "We built a total of three applications, the first one being a financial application. But the first thing we did – and this is an added benefit of QlikView as it requires you to review your groundwork – was streamline our data structure. So we unified all the financial reports from the various countries and systems and incorporated them into a single Excel report. This data was exported to our central SQL Server database, which acts as the source for QlikView. The implementation process went so smoothly that we were able to use QlikView to report on the past year and make forecasts for the new year at our annual management meeting. In the past we needed lots of Excel spreadsheets and huge effort to integrate them into a PowerPoint presentation. The QlikView presentations resulted in many happy faces," De Groot recalls.

"Next, we started building an operational application for our buying subsidies. We buy huge amounts of products on a daily basis and sell them to our Cash and Carry branches, which resell the products. All the information on those transactions was residing in the Oracle database mentioned before. Using its reporting tool we could only extract highly static information and long lists of data, for example on sales

trends or customer margins. Now, with QlikView, we can disclose this data easily, drill down to detail level, and gain new insights. Finally, we developed an ADP-based HRM application to track data such as overtime, productivity and sick leave per employee. It only took a short time to build the three applications: the groundwork was realized within two weeks. The design of the underlying structure took more time, four months. Developing a Web version for our international sales representatives wasn't easy either, but this one too is performing well right now."

Working independently

QlikView delivers major time savings. "Previously, we spent a lot of time collecting data, creating Excel spreadsheets, and interpreting information. Actually, the process took so much time that there was no time left to use the information! Now the job is done on the fly enabling us to notice any deficiencies immediately. Clear visualization helps you pinpoint weaknesses and take appropriate measures quickly. On top of that, the solution's speed and ease-of-use will stimulate users to work independently eliminating the need for assistance from the administration department. Another key benefit is the users' ability to organize and manage their own 'cockpit', adapting and expanding it as needed. In a decentralized and dynamic environment which requires continuous steering and adjusting, this feature is an absolute must. It's a good feeling to have an intuitive and visual in-house tool which doesn't require you to take 30 flight lessons before you can handle the cockpit."



The applications are being used by six finance and quality team managers (the quality team is involved in all the purchase, sales and logistics operations of the buying subsidies) and six managers of the international Cash and Carry branches. Moving forward Fleura will also build applications for accounts receivable management and point-of-sale management. De Groot expects the latter, in particular, will lead to an increased number of users. "Until now we have been focusing on sales managers who are responsible for multiple branches. Upon completion of the point-of-sale management application the user base will be extended to include those responsible for a single branch. But we hesitate to continue the QlikView roll-out as we fear we may lose control due to the popularity of the package. And that would be a real shame."

“ We wanted a cutting-edge product which would be easy to use, fast to implement and self-explanatory. ”

Casper de Groot, Financial Director, Fleura