

Mercury Medical a healthcare manufacturer improves reporting and analysis with IBM Cognos Express



Overview:

Challenge

Mercury's current Legacy Reporting Platform sales and reporting platform was not very intuitive for advanced dashboard functions and they felt the maintenance support on this system was declining.

Why IBM?

IBM Software Valuenet Reselling Partner, BlueNET Technologies introduced Mercury Medical to Cognos Express through the 30-day product trial that allowed BlueNET to create a custom report and analysis demo tailored to Mercury's specific data and user needs.

Solution

Cognos Express met Mercury Medical's recovery time objectives, giving the company confidence in its decision.

Benefits

Mercury's users can now create the most critical reports that they were previously relying on a Legacy Reporting Platform to produce. These include sales commissions, weekly sales, a rolling 12-month sales report, and an inventory summary report.

"IBM Cognos Express exceeded our expectations. Sales people and managers can run the reports themselves from a secure web interface, and we can email reports to users and sales people for the first time."

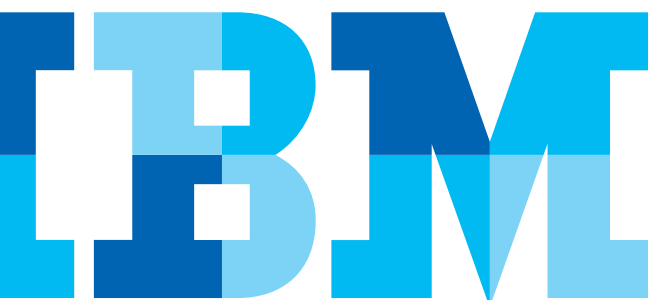
—Leslie Freeman, Director of IT, Mercury Medical

Recognized for its excellence in manufacturing medical products, Mercury Medical sells to hospitals, biomedical clinics, suppliers of medical rental equipment and home care providers. Quality is paramount at the company, as Leslie Freeman, Mercury's Director of IT, explains: "Everything we do filters up to our quality policy, which has an underlying theme of understanding and fulfilling each customer's needs with sensitivity, professionalism, ethics and optimal quality."

Reporting on sales data is one way that the company better understands both its customers and its success in meeting customer needs. Mercury was using a Legacy Reporting Platform as its sales-reporting platform. In fact, through interviews with business users, Mercury's committee on business resiliency learned that the reporting platform was widely considered to be a critical application throughout the company.

Over time, eager users demanded more analytical and dashboarding capabilities. But, "the version of this Legacy Reporting Platform that we were using was not very intuitive for advanced functions like dashboards," Freeman recalls. "I'm a former programmer and even I found it too difficult to create a dashboard."

More concerning was that Mercury perceived that maintenance support on the existing system was declining. Furthermore, Mercury determined that in the case of a failure, the reporting system would need to be recoverable within four to eight hours. "The server was old and needed to be replaced, but we were very concerned that we would not get the support we needed," Freeman adds.



She and her team set out to find a new solution that would provide web-based reporting, analysis and dashboarding capabilities. Through IBM Software Premier IBM Partner, BlueNET Technologies, Mercury Medical was introduced to Cognos Express.

Custom Demo Generates Excitement

BlueNET took advantage of the free 30-day trial that is offered with Cognos Express to create a custom reporting and analytics demo tailored to Mercury Medical's data and user needs. "BlueNET used the trial period to learn about our business, how we view our data, and communicated with me to prepare a demo for our users," Freeman explains.

The custom demo was presented to users on an appointed day. Freeman recalls, "The users saw their day-to-day tasks, their terminology and their data. The whole room was just in awe – people came up to me after the demo session saying, 'Let's sign up now!'"

Hilmi Alphan Ozturk of BlueNET adds: "From our perspective, the trial period is a distinguishing factor of IBM Cognos Express and Mercury Medical took good advantage of it. We spent the time working with them as a partner to gain a better understanding of their business requirements so that the users could interact with the product meaningfully. And by the end of the trial we understood 75% of Mercury's requirements, reporting specifications and so on – so it was mutually beneficial."

Improving on Critical Reports

Mercury Medical needed to see that its users could create the most critical reports that they were previously relying on a Legacy Reporting Platform to produce. These include sales commissions, weekly sales, a rolling 12-month sales report, and an inventory summary report.

Freeman says, "Cognos Express exceeded our expectations. Sales people and managers can run the reports themselves from a secure web interface and we can email reports to users and sales people for the first time."

Previously, Mercury relied on its ERP system for some of the sales reports – and those reports could not be exported to Excel for analysis. "We actually had to print the reports from the ERP system and mail them through U.S. Mail," Freeman says. "So the ability to email reports using IBM Cognos Express is a significant improvement."

The ability to drill down from summary information to transactional details is also valuable for Mercury's business users. Ozturk explains: "Mercury Medical users can now move seamlessly from a whole-world picture to country, region, customer, product type and invoice-level details. These drill-through capabilities pave the road for meaningful analysis for executives – it is a non-technical way to build a pathway through the data and its analysis."

In addition to the new capabilities that Cognos Express is providing for Mercury Medical, Freeman notes that it is also improving efficiencies. Now, rather than asking staff to create ad hoc reports, managers can run predefined reports themselves with the click of a mouse. "Creating and saving reports for users to access cuts down on staff time spent running reports all day."

A True Reporting Platform

Cognos Express met Mercury Medical's recovery time objectives, giving the company confidence in its decision. "Cognos Express is easy to install from a backup and to recover to any server," Freeman confirms.

In fact, using the product's web-based administration utility, the content of the Cognos Express application is saved to a pre-scheduled .zip file that is easily recovered via the web.

The simplicity of the product's user license structure is also appealing, Freeman confirms: "We saw the structure of other products but Cognos Express made the most sense to us in terms of the licensing structure because we didn't know what type of users we had. With Express, you buy a connector, not roles, and every user has similar access. It's very simple and that is very attractive for a company like ours."

This combination of simplicity and confidence make it easy for Freeman to consider expanded uses of the product. For example, she plans to provide Mercury's Finance department with tools using Cognos Express Advisor financial data marts.

She also sees the Cognos Express solution as a platform that will serve Mercury Medical in many areas of the business in future. While other hosted (SaaS-based) systems used throughout the organization provide some reporting capabilities, she sees greater opportunities with Cognos Express.

"Eventually, I would like to marry the opportunities created in Microsoft CRM with data from other sources and for Cognos Express to be the only reporting and analysis tool that we use throughout the business," she says. "Our clinical services and home care divisions have their own software systems and those offer basic reporting, but you can't use it for analysis. My goal is to say that we have one reporting tool for everyone."

About Mercury Medical

Mercury Medical is a comprehensive health care company specializing in anesthesia, respiratory and critical care products and services. We are recognized for excellence in manufacturing high quality medical products including End Tidal CO2 Detectors, Masked Laryngeal Airways, CPR Bags, CPAP, Hyperinflation Bags and Negative Inspiratory Force Meters.

Mercury Medical has been in business for over 46 years and is headquartered in Clearwater, Florida with a regional depot in Atlanta, Georgia. These locations both maintain inventory of equipment and repair parts. For more information visit: <http://www.mercurymed.com>

About BlueNET Technologies

BlueNET Technologies Inc. is an end-to-end Information Technology (IT) solution provider offering a wide variety of services including Business Intelligence (BI), Business Process Management, Enterprise Integration, Multichannel Services, Financial Planning & Forecasting, Data Warehouse, and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems development and implementation. Through our strategic partnerships with leading technology companies we can also offer our clients a comprehensive range of software products, IT outsourcing, and IT staffing services.

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