



Now Foods' Success Story with iDashboards

Business Drivers for Dashboards

Located in Bloomingdale, Illinois, NOW Foods is one of the country's most respected manufacturers of award winning products including vitamins, minerals, dietary supplements, natural foods and health-related products. The company manufactures over 1,800 health supplements from its state-of-the-art 209,000 square foot facility.

The company's senior management wanted live visibility to key performance indicators (KPIs) from its Oracle Apps running on Oracle 9i to provide monthly trend, and comparison with a year-ago data. Earlier, they could get access to the KPIs only at periodic intervals when the Analysts would extract the data, import into excel, create charts and transfer into Power Point for presentation.

Following is the summary of key performance indicators and their real-time presentation as needed by the senior management in the company.

- ✍ Total Return on Capital – 2 years of information with drill-down provided to list income by division for each of the periods.
- ✍ Monthly overhead as a percent of sales - 2 years of information with drill-down provided to list sales and total overhead by division for each of the periods. Further drilldown to total overhead by cost center for the division chosen.
- ✍ Inventory Months on Hand – The number of months of inventory on hand at the end of each month with drill-down into the 50 individual items with the highest number of months on hand.
- ✍ Percentage of Orders Shipped Complete – A line graph showing the total company's percentage of orders shipped complete on a monthly basis with drill-down to the percentage of orders shipped complete by order type. Drilling down from this to a list of the top 50 items that failed to ship for that month causing the low percentage.
- ✍ Percentage of Orders Taking more than 24 Hours to Ship - A line graph showing the total company's percentage of orders shipped after 24 hours on a monthly basis. Drilling down from this to a graph showing the percentage of orders shipped after 24 hours by order type.
- ✍ NOW's Monthly Market Share – A bar graph showing market share by month for a 2 year period. Graph draws from an excel spreadsheet.

Solutions Explored

Several options were explored for a possible solution. For example:

- ✍ Oracle's Daily BI
- ✍ Noetix Dashboards
- ✍ iDashboards
- ✍ Custom in-house development

Each of the above options had their pros and cons. In the end, it was decided to do a Proof-of-concept with iDashboards. One key advantage being that it allowed pulling data from multiple different databases such as Microsoft SQL Server, Microsoft Access and Excel. Cost was a factor, and iDashboards provided the most compelling Return on Investment (ROI), which helped in getting the company's CFO support.

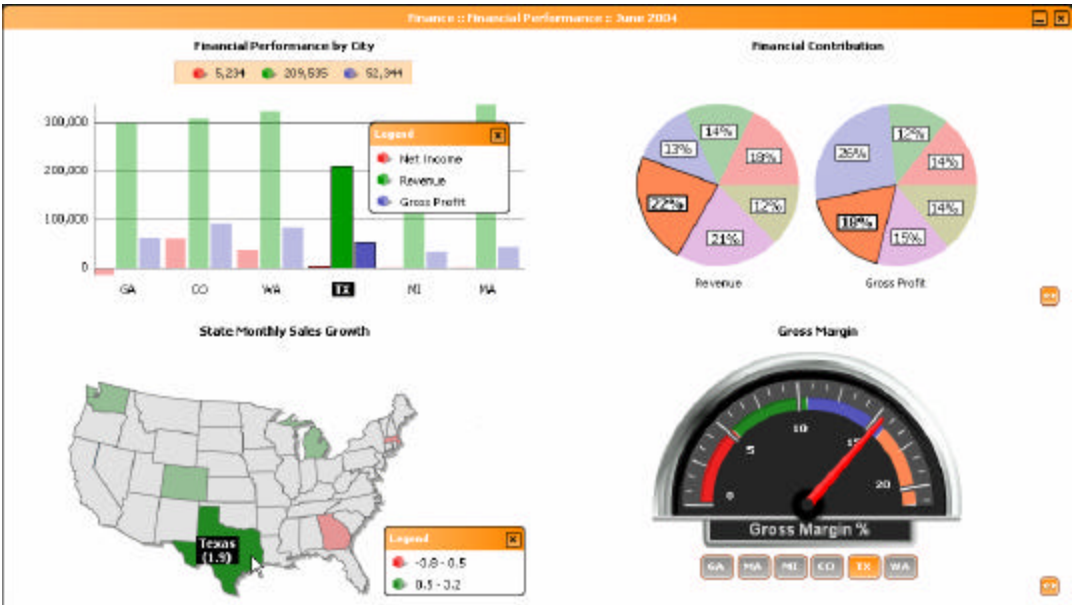
End Solution

As a result of the joint effort between NOW Foods' Analyst and DBA team, and iDashboards' Professional Services team, a dashboard solution was developed that met the requirements of delivering real-time or near-time KPIs to the management team.

One key challenge was the time to arrive at the aggregate metrics. An overnight job updates aggregate tables that store these KPIs for the 24 months. Only the current and previous months' numbers are updated through the nightly run. Previous months were populated through an initial run because the historical transactions don't change. The dashboards instantly display the metrics.

One KPI that required manual update of an Excel spreadsheet was incorporated through the Linked Server approach in Microsoft SQL Server. This allowed us to update the Excel spreadsheet, which was immediately visible to the end-users through iDashboards.

Now with the training and knowledge transfer provided by the iDashboards consultant, the NOW Analyst and DBA team have completed various dashboards to provide cost center managers real-time information they will need on a daily basis.



Example Financial Performance Dashboard – users click on a chart to drill-down into further details