

ARMAMENT RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND ENGINEERING CENTER



“A SINGLE VIEW OF BUSINESS DATA ACROSS DIFFERENT DATA SOURCES IS NOT MUCH TO ASK. A COMMON USER INTERFACE FOR EASY ‘ONE STOP SHOPPING’ IS NOT A NOVEL OR UNREASONABLE REQUEST.”

– MARK SAUVAGEAU, CHIEF, OPERATIONS AND MATRIX, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, US ARMY ARDEC

US ARMY ARDEC

The US Army’s Armament Research Development and Engineering Center (ARDEC) manages life-cycle engineering processes required for the research, development, production, field support, and demilitarization of ammunition, weapons, fire control and associated items.

Industry:

- Defense / Public Sector

Geography:

- United States

Information Needs:

- Access to heterogeneous data sources
- Self-serve report authoring for business users
- Data consistency

Platforms:

- SAP BW
- MS SQL Server
- MS Excel
- SAP R/3
- SOMARDS S2K (proprietary)

Users:

- 3000+

Solution:

- Cognos 8 Business Intelligence
- Cognos 8 Planning

Benefits:

- Access to all enterprise data sources
- Self-serve reporting for Users
- Cost effectiveness
- Faster time-to-production

ARDEC began working with Cognos in 1995. Since then, ARDEC’s reporting and analysis needs have evolved in parallel with the advance of Cognos business intelligence abilities. This evolution helps ARDEC meet mandatory reporting and data requirements which must comply with federal guidelines.

As the IT environment grew to include systems with legacy databases and home-grown solutions, it became more difficult to gain visibility into all of ARDEC’s activities. This challenge led to an SAP® ERP implementation for consolidating transactions and operations.

The boost SAP provided to overall organizational management made the investment worthwhile and helped ARDEC increase overall operational effectiveness. But shortfalls in reporting resulted in unhappy users and a drop in the use of reports across the organization.

PROBLEMS FACED

“Implementing SAP on ARDEC’s reporting was paralyzing. When the switch was turned on, there were no reports,” says Mark Sauvageau, ARDEC Chief of Operations and Matrix for Financial Management. “So the BW team turned to SAP R/3® reports and scrambled to design some SAP BW Business Explorer (BEx) reports. The user response was not positive: the new reports were rigid and difficult to layout; we lost our ability to report on a single version of the truth across multiple data sources. There were complaints about all aspects of SAP reporting. The business terms were different. The reports could not be printed.”



With the addition of SAP, 3,500 ARDEC users now faced three versions of the truth regarding their financial data — one from the SAP R/3 transaction system, one from the SAP Business Warehouse, and another from their non-SAP systems. There was no option for reports that consolidated all three sources.

ARDEC's success relied in part on the Financial Analyst user community being able to provide accurate turn-around reports to customers. With that in jeopardy, ARDEC needed a solution to its reporting problems sooner rather than later.

STRATEGY FOLLOWED

ARDEC set out to leverage its SAP investment while also delivering organizational performance reports. Sauvageau's Financial Management (FM) team was responsible for the Cognos implementation and knew reporting was business critical. When ARDEC's SAP team asked for reporting help, FM responded with a plan that included help from Cognos.

Together, the FM team and Cognos setup a single secure sign-on process for accessing both the Cognos portal and the SAP portal. Cognos business intelligence reporting with SAP BW and non-SAP data was enabled in *three months*.

"We chose Cognos as a user-friendly way to report from SAP for financial metrics," says Alnor. "Cognos gives us ad hoc, static, and formatted reporting to help us answer questions on the fly. This enhances our investment in SAP. Our business users build their own reports, rather than relying on programmers to navigate the SAP report-building environment."

Rather than fall into a one size fits all approach, ARDEC pursued the best tools for specific needs. According to Sauvageau, when it comes to data, it may not be realistic to keep everything in one place.

"One example is our budget data. This is data from a ColdFusion application written six years ago. The beauty of Cognos 8 is that it doesn't care. Its data integration capability gathers all ARDEC data from SAP BW, SQL Server, and Excel® spreadsheets.

A single view of business data across different data sources is not much to ask. A common user interface for easy 'one stop shopping' is not a novel or unreasonable request. It actually cuts down on maintenance costs and easily improves user attitudes towards the system."

For ARDEC, leveraging its SAP investment through Cognos makes sense. By relying on SAP BW for modeling and architectural features as well as its role as the main data repository, ARDEC is leveraging the solution's strength. Similarly, staff turn to Cognos 8 Business Intelligence as a user-friendly, ad hoc report solution for presenting SAP BW and non-SAP data in printable, presentable, drillable reports.

BENEFITS REALIZED

ARDEC has won more than twenty-five awards over the last decade. These awards would not have been possible without the help of the Cognos suite of tools used to submit Qualitative Data Packages. Another tangible benefit was ARDEC being funded for \$4.7M for awards. There was a documented savings to customers (via the Cognos toolset) of \$237.5M from FY97-FY01. Their estimated savings to customers was \$423M from FY95-FY05.

"One of the great things about Cognos is you don't have to be an IT guru," says Alnor. "I'm definitely not one. There is no programming in my background. We're a financial management group that is responsible for the entire BI deployment and Cognos makes it easy. If you have a problem you call Cognos Support and they'll walk you through it. I've installed Cognos 8. And it took me only a few hours. It's as simple in the back end as it is in the front end."

Access to multiple data sources has allowed management to make critical decisions quickly and has proven more cost effective compared to an SAP-based reporting solution. ARDEC uses Cognos to address the reporting needs of five levels of management, from dashboard-style reports for senior leadership, to status-type reports for managers, and day-to-day detail reports for operational staff.

“We have deployed Cognos to our financial and operational staff as well as high-level managers, but plan to roll it out to all users within the organization. With Cognos, people have an easier time understanding the numbers they see,” says Sauvageau. “Our time for report-building is 50 percent faster from development to production. In fact, we have a faster time-to-production for new projects. It only took 10 minutes to integrate with SAP BW.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Beyond reports that consolidate SAP BW and non-SAP data sources, FM is now actively working with Cognos to integrate SAP transaction data for a single, organization-wide view of performance management information. FM also intends to integrate information from Microsoft Project for one view of all aspects of program management. Eventually, employees will start their day with a personal dashboard showing all the key metrics for their individual projects, be able to drill down through the dashboard to the root causes of missed metrics, and take corrective action. As part of this process, Sauvageau’s FM team is also rolling out Cognos Planning to draw on financial data from the SAP BW system.

ABOUT COGNOS

Cognos, the world leader in business intelligence and performance management solutions, provides world-class enterprise planning and BI software and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance.

Cognos brings together technology, analytical applications, best practices, and a broad network of partners to give customers a complete performance system. The Cognos performance system is an open and adaptive solution that leverages an organization’s ERP, packaged applications, and database investments. It gives customers the ability to answer the questions — How are we doing? Why are we on or off track? What should we do about it? — and enables them to understand and monitor current performance while planning future business strategies.

Cognos serves more than 23,000 customers in more than 135 countries, and its top 100 enterprise customers consistently outperform market indexes. Cognos performance management solutions and services are also available from more than 3,000 worldwide partners and resellers. For more information, visit the Cognos Web site at <http://www.cognos.com>.



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