

Adsteam Marine

ABOUT ADSTEAM MARINE

Adsteam Marine serves a global customer base spanning four continents with a fleet of more than 200 vessels, such as tug boats, barges, workboats and launches.

With activities including harbour towage, tug barging, fuel bunkering, workboat and offshore services, ocean salvage and ships' agency, Adsteam Marine is a leading international provider of maritime services. The group's operations cover major cargo ports in Australia, the UK and the Pacific.



FULL STEAM AHEAD

In 2001, Adsteam Marine doubled in size after acquiring Howard Smith Towage. As part of that acquisition, Adsteam took on Microsoft Dynamics™ GP as their standard financial software solution.

Two years ago, a new MD was appointed. An operational review took place and the Business Transformation Program commenced. One of the major transformation program projects, the Enterprise Simplification project, was to consolidate Adsteam's 70+ legal entities roughly by half and create a management reporting system to support the company's new strategy.

As part of the management reporting system implementation project, 24 KPIs were determined to support the senior and operational management teams who were not receiving the information they needed in a timely manner. Senior management needed a more accurate picture of the health of the major part of the business. The KPIs included the number of tug jobs, indices on market share, debtor days, crew costs, vessel utilisation and even the number of crew injuries per one million hours worked.

The Group IT Manager, Mei Ling Chu, in conjunction with the Financial and the Operations teams were asked to deliver these KPIs electronically in a dashboard display using business intelligence software. The web-based display with traffic lights would rate the KPIs performance as green, amber or red and would focus the attention of the senior management team on problem areas of the business.

As part of this project, Mei Ling also had to consider how to maintain IT support while the business exited 32 of 70+ legal entities. This would involve considerable amounts of data migration and system modifications.

In a competitive tender held in November 2003, Adsteam Marine looked at four alternatives for a business intelligence solution that could draw information from Dynamics™ GP, international subsidiaries, the HR system and another custom-built booking system.

While each vendor could deliver a BI solution, Adsteam Marine chose Professional Advantage mainly because their solution projected a quicker ROI and lower total cost of ownership. A big factor was also their experience in delivering Microsoft based Business Intelligence solutions plus their methodology and impressive track record in Dynamics™ GP implementation and configuration.

"It was comforting to hear an IT services company understand the dynamics of our industry, and offer real business solutions, not just technology. This understanding came from Professional Advantage's Dynamics™ GP partner relationship with Adsteam prior to the management reporting project," Mei Ling said.

BENEFITS

The benefits for Adsteam Marine have been almost instantaneous.

"One of the core deliverables for the project was a quick return on investment from a rapid implementation. The implementation was complete within five months (including development) and at this stage we expect a complete return within 2 years - aligning with our expectations," Mei Ling said.

The Business Intelligence system delivered by Professional Advantage was very easy to use. Adsteam Harbour Commercial Manager, Peter Gould said, "Not much training is required. The data is useful for trend analysis and monthly report preparations." It allows self service for all decision makers, reducing their reliance for regular and ad-hoc reporting data on IT, Financial and Operations teams.

The management team has been pleased with the dashboard information. It is not only providing month end reports by day 6 each month instead of the previous day 15, it also helps effective management decision making by analysing underlying causes and taking actions leading toward improved KPI trends over medium term.

"I consider the biggest outcome of the implementation is that Professional Advantage's BI system has become such an important tool for management, the information necessary to make fast business decisions is readily available. We are looking forward to completing the Ocean and Terminals implementation so that we have virtually a 100 percent company view," Adsteam Financial Reporting Manager, Mardi Davies, said.

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THE FUTURE

Adsteam Marine's three year business strategy bases on annual business themes - a "Business Fitness program" in FY 2004, a "Lowest Cost Platform" this financial year and a "Sustainable Selective Growth" theme in FY 2006.

The next phase of the implementation has just commenced and will involve linking the Oceans and Terminals business into the BI solution.

"In addition to the BI rollout, we have just upgraded our Dynamics™ GP software and are looking forward to working in partnership with Professional Advantage to guarantee these projects are as successful as the BI implementation," Mei Ling concluded.

TECHNOLOGY

In late November 2003, Professional Advantage's Business Intelligence team sat down with Mei Ling's team to plan the implementation. A two-phase approach was adapted. The first phase was to implement the BI solution around the largest portion of Adsteam's business, the Harbour division, by July 2004. The second phase would look at the Ocean and Terminals part of the business to be completed by end of FY 2005.

Professional Advantage recommended Microsoft technologies - SQL Server and Analysis Services to extract data from more than 30 Dynamics™ GP databases, Adsteam's custom built booking system and Excel spreadsheets from overseas entities; and Windows SharePoint Services to deliver the information to the users.

A key part of the overall solution included Webhouse, Professional Advantage's pre-configured BI software built specifically for Microsoft's Dynamics™ GP ERP solution. The advantage of Webhouse was its ability to provide an immediate and cost effective solution and reduce the usual "months long" implementation down to days.

Mei Ling Chu said, "The Harbour division implementation went very smoothly. Given the sheer complexity of the project, I was very impressed with Professional Advantage's commitment to deliver on their promises."

"The implementation was delivered on time and on budget despite the considerable amount of data migration required and the need to connect different data sources," Mei Ling said.

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Mei Ling Chu
Group IT Manager, Adsteam Marine

ABOUT PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGE

Professional Advantage is a Microsoft Gold Certified partner for Business Intelligence and a leading provider of integrated business solutions in Australia. Using our knowledge and expertise in Business Intelligence we work with customers to develop cost-effective, complete reporting and analysis systems architected for scalability and flexibility.

Would you like to find out more?
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