

Cognos to MicroStrategy Migration using Agile BI

→ **Type of Project:**
MicroStrategy Reporting and Data Integration

→ **Technologies:**
MicroStrategy, SQL Server, SSIS

→ **Team Size:**
5 InfoCeptians, 5 Customer Associates

→ **Our Roles:**
Project Management, Solution Architecture, Data Integration and MicroStrategy report development

→ **Users:**
Project Managers, Finance Managers, Human Resources Managers



Executive Summary:

Our client, a consulting and technology solution provider was confronted with a challenge of re-developing all their custom reports while upgrading their reporting system and wanted us to help them in implementing an entirely new solution rapidly. To achieve this, we migrated the clients reporting system from Cognos to MicroStrategy using Agile methodology resulting in a highly efficient and easily accessible system that was widely adopted by the business users.

Business Challenge

Our customer is a leading provider of business consulting and technology solutions in the areas of financial management, performance improvement, and national security solutions to commercial and government clients.

Our customer uses Deltek as its ERP solution. Deltek is the leading provider of enterprise software and information solutions for professional services firms and government contractors. The two primary Deltek modules being used by our customer are Deltek Costpoint and Deltek Time & Expense. Costpoint tracks, manages and reports on every aspect of a project. Deltek Time & Expense primarily provides functionality to automate the collection, validation, approval and processing of labor and associated expenses.

Our customer had been using Cognos for reporting and analysis of their Deltek ERP data. They had a combination of canned reports that came bundled with Deltek as well as a set of 120 custom reports that they had built over time. A new release of Cognos required that our customer would have to completely re-write their Cognos reports. This prompted their Director of IT to take a fresh look at their reporting needs as well

as a fresh look at their reporting platform. After an extensive evaluation of leading business intelligence tools, our customer chose MicroStrategy as their BI standard. They chose MicroStrategy for its ease of maintenance, security architecture and highly interactive interface that promotes end user self-service.

Our project was the first time that MicroStrategy was used as a reporting engine for a Deltek system. So the primary challenges for the project team lay in working with the underlying Deltek tables. Deltek's data model is highly normalized, optimized for OLTP applications. Views were to be created to provide a de-normalized snowflake schema for MicroStrategy to query. In addition, since we were working without a data warehouse, dealing with slowly changing dimensions was a challenge. Views became very complex.

How We Helped

We were challenged with a tight deadline to bring the new MicroStrategy application up in a short period. Our customer has an open enrollment period each May. It was critical that data related to each employee's insurance policy was up to date and reflected in the new MicroStrategy reports. We began the project in early March with a hard deadline of May 1st.

With our agile methodology, we produced, in this highly accelerated development:

- Analysis of 117 legacy reports with an objective of reducing the reports to bring efficiency in the system. We were able to reduce the number of reports to 65. MicroStrategy's Object Prompts were a big factor in helping us to reduce the number of reports.
- Re-engineering of Cognos reports that were undocumented, with no one from our customer having any knowledge of the logic behind the reports. We were able to re-create the logic with significant analysis and brainstorming with our customer and internally.
- 57 core reports that provided analysis across our customer's business, including Accounts Receivable, Expenses Tracking, Timesheet Compliance, Project Management, Contracts, General Ledger, Human Resources, Open Enrollment and Benefits Tracking and Labor Utilization
- A data virtualization layer instead of a fully architected data warehouse greatly impacted our project time lines. We designed the data virtualization layer to be scalable and extensible to accommodate our customers planned data base (SQL Server) migrations.
- Complex pre-calculations were performed in the virtualization layer to enable fast report performance.
- The architecture was also designed to integrate data from two Deltek databases where data is refreshed in different time intervals (one every 15 minutes, the other daily)

High ROI BI Delivered

With extremely tight deadlines, we worked with our customer to create a new business intelligence with the following benefits:

- ➔ An easy to maintain MicroStrategy reporting system that reduced the number of reports from 117 to 65 while providing increased functionality and analytical capability
- ➔ Easier accessibility to the system's end users since the new application is provided via a web interface rather than the legacy's desktop application
- ➔ A BI application that provides high performance and scalability with a highly intuitive user interface
- ➔ Wider adoption of the new BI system with its feature rich reports and ease of use. The legacy application was only used by IT. End users would request reports that were then developed and delivered by IT. The new web based system made the BI system available to over 100 users in the company, whereas the legacy system was only used by 10 to 15 on average

➔ About InfoCepts

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specific methodologies and global delivery model provides exceptional ROI for our customers. Our services include high quality Mobile Apps, award winning Dashboards and end-to-end business intelligence development and support using a host of technologies.

