InfoCepts

End to End BI Application Management, Support and Optimization

Type of Project:
BI Application Management and Optimization - 24x7 Support

Technologies:
MicroStrategy, Informatica, Netezza, Oracle, SQL Server, SecureX, TIBCO BusinessWorks and Business Connect, Tibco EMS Server

Team Size:
15 InfoCeptians, 5 Customer Associates

Our Roles:
Complete ownership of our customer's BI system

Users:
Merchandise Planners, Store Managers, Sales Manager, Business Analysts

Executive Summary:

Our customer, a leading specialty retailer had built their BI applications on the MicroStrategy, Informatica and Netezza platforms. Leveraging our global delivery model and technology specific tools and methodology, we helped our customer increase efficiency for numerous processes that included automating upgrades and testing routines for MicroStrategy, and reducing the load time and downtime by 70% and 30% respectively for Informatica. We also reduced MicroStrategy licensing costs by automating the license management process. We provided 24x7 proactive monitoring and support that has reduced the overall incident tickets for the customer's BI system by 20%.

Business Challenge

Our customer is a leading national retailer with approximately 1,300 stores across the US. Their HQ based team provides shared BI services to a wide range of users, including top executives, business analysts, merchandise planners, store managers, HR managers and sales executives. With over 6.5 terabytes of data, more than 5,500 users and around 20,000 reports, the BI team faces many challenges that require the team to juggle system support tasks, development tasks and "change" tasks that aim to optimize and innovate.

For several years, our customer had used a global delivery model for support, development and optimization of their MicroStrategy/Netezza/Informatica system. The team was composed of seasoned BI professionals who were full-time employees of our customer, supported by an offshore team managed by a vendor. Though our customer had some success with this relationship, their challenges were many, including:
- A vendor that did little more than "keep the lights on"
- The vendor had some experience with our customer's core BI technologies; however their expertise was not at the level that our customer needed to truly optimize and evolve their BI systems
- The vendor was unable to provide the level of support needed to resolve issues quickly. Issue resolution often took days more than expected.
- The vendor often failed to take ownership of issues and did not do a good job of staying on top of critical issues, both technical and programmatic.

Facing frequent and on-going issues, our customer realized that they needed a "partner", not just a "vendor" in the journey to take their BI systems to the next level. They chose us as their partner for this journey.

How We Helped

Our customer expected that we would leverage our experience and expertise with their core technologies – MicroStrategy, Informatica, Netezza and Tibco – and provide them with a high level of system management and support.

A key component of the value we have been able to provide to this customer is our BI Application Management and Optimization (AMnO) Program, which encapsulates our experiences in developing, optimizing and supporting complex BI systems.

Transition and Knowledge Transfer

A critical component of our program is the "Transition Phase", where responsibilities are transferred from either another vendor or our customer. This was the first time our customer had ever transitioned from one strategic vendor to another so this phase and the preparation required were especially critical.

Our plan called for an eight to twelve week transition period, comprised of the following phases:

1. Planning phase – We created the plan and priorities for knowledge transfer and transition. Reporting/governance framework for the overall relationship was developed
2. Knowledge Transfer – During this phase we acquired the business, process and technical knowledge we needed to run and optimize the BI system. Knowledge transfer sessions were driven by questionnaires we have developed that are rooted in our experiences
3. Shadow Support – During this phase we served in a secondary role while the incumbent vendor continued to serve in a primary role. The primary purpose of this phase is knowledge reinforcement
4. Guided Support – During this phase we had the primary role, with the incumbent in a support role
5. Steady State – We took primary responsibility for the systems with on-call support from the previous vendor

We measured the success of the knowledge transfer and transition to our team by two primary criteria:

Completeness – We prepared a comprehensive list of topics that required knowledge transfer from the outgoing vendor. The information was cross verified with our customer's technical leaders.
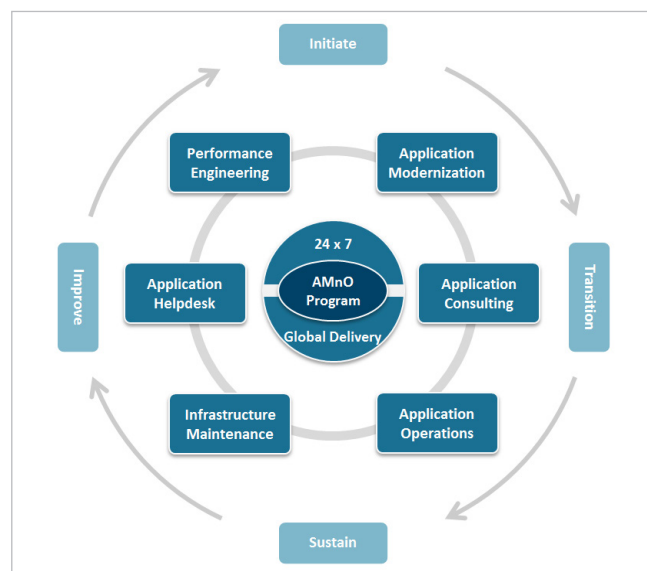
Effectiveness – The effectiveness of the knowledge transfer was verified by conducting reverse knowledge transfer sessions with our customer and the outgoing vendor teams. Our ability to resolve support tickets in a timely manner to the satisfaction of the system's users provided further evidence of knowledge transfer effectiveness.

Ongoing Management and Optimization

The key attributes of the program implementation at this customer include:

- Enabled our customer's key people to focus on strategic activities rather than "run" activities
- Introduced an engagement and governance framework to provide advice to our customer to stay on the cutting edge of BI/DW technologies and programs
- Created an integrated support dashboard, enabling administrators to monitor the entire MicroStrategy, Informatica and Netezza environment from one interface
- Leveraged our technology specific diagnostics, optimization and support tools and methodology to maximize ROI
- Provided 24x7 support at a high quality level with greatly reduced costs, leveraging our global delivery model

(703) 289-5117 | www.infocepts.com | High ROI DW and BI Solutions   **InfoCepts**

- Actively deployed both our internal and industry best practices
- Scheduled issue analysis to take proactive measures
- Implemented a mobile ticketing system that provides all team members with real time access to issues and support tickets

- Created a new BI environment for the customer distribution centers to eliminate their dependency on other systems, thus ensuring minimal downtime for supply chain related activities

High ROI BI Delivered

During the course of the first year of this new relationship with our customer, we achieved the following for each of the key technologies and processes that we support and optimize:

Overall
- Automated the user management strategy, reducing manual processes by 50%
- Achieved a 20% reduction in incident tickets, with proactive alerts

MicroStrategy
- Streamlined the MicroStrategy upgrades by automating Integrity Manager tests, resulting in a 50% reduction in testing efforts
- Automated MicroStrategy testing routines, reducing the time required for upgrades while increasing the integrity of reports and associated data
- Automated MicroStrategy license management to allow department heads to manage their own licenses thus reducing reliance on the central team, resulting in an overall reduction in MicroStrategy licensing

Informatica
- Reduced ETL downtime by 30% by automating Informatica Server status checks

- Reduced ETL load time by 70% by optimizing workflows and SQL, and using SAP Power Exchange
- Automated deletion of backups (previously done manually) reducing person effort required by 20%

Netezza
- Migrated Netezza from Mustang to TwinFin which reduced MicroStrategy response time by 30% and ETL batch load time by 30%
- Automated database deployment, reducing script preparation and deployment time by 70%

Oracle/SQL Server
- Implemented proactive monitoring of tablespaces to reduce paging alerts by 30%
- Implemented new monitoring scripts to optimize the database monitoring system for false alerts thereby reducing the false alerts by 50%

⊕ About InfoCepts

Since 2004, InfoCepts has delivered on the promise of Business Intelligence. Our consulting capabilities and process oriented approach, with world class governance frameworks have delivered high quality solutions to our customers. Our technology 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.

InfoCepts