

SAP BusinessObjects

Leading business intelligence software company accelerates innovation and boosts adoption with the Adobe® Flash® Platform

SAP BusinessObjects

www.sap.com



Industry

Technology

Challenges

- Expand adoption of BI tools to more business users
- Create a dynamic user experience
- Accelerate product innovation

Solution

- Business intelligence
SAP BusinessObjects is using the Adobe Flash Platform to create breakthrough business intelligence visualization, data analysis, and search solutions.

Results

- Drove increased adoption of BI across entire organizations instead of small segments with dynamic, intuitive experiences
- Reduced product development cycle from years to months
- Improved interactivity and quality of BI search and analytics
- Streamlined BI adoption for technical and non-technical users alike
- Delivered online and offline BI analysis options

Systems At A Glance

- Adobe AIR®
- Adobe Flash Player
- Adobe Flex
- Adobe Flex Builder
- Adobe LiveCycle® Data Services ES

Transforming business intelligence

It is not uncommon for managers to think of business intelligence (BI) software as complicated to use, requiring a specific set of skills to understand and explore data structures and build queries. In fact, SAP finds that only about 10% of managers within a company typically adopt BI, even though many more would benefit from it.

With the goal of expanding the reach and impact of BI software within enterprises of all sizes, SAP BusinessObjects is reinventing how people engage with and benefit from powerful, easy-to-use BI tools. As one of the world's leading providers of BI software, SAP BusinessObjects is using the Adobe Flash Platform to transform user experiences with its popular Xcelsius and Explorer solutions by delivering software with dynamic dashboards, next-generation visualization capabilities, and highly intuitive data search and filtering capabilities.

“We are going beyond the traditional pool of BI power users and enabling more executives and managers to leverage BI tools every day,” says James Thomas, vice president of product marketing for SAP BusinessObjects. “With BI tools based on the Adobe Flash Platform, business users can quickly access and analyze enterprise data to better understand the business without assistance from IT or business analysts.”

A BI leader

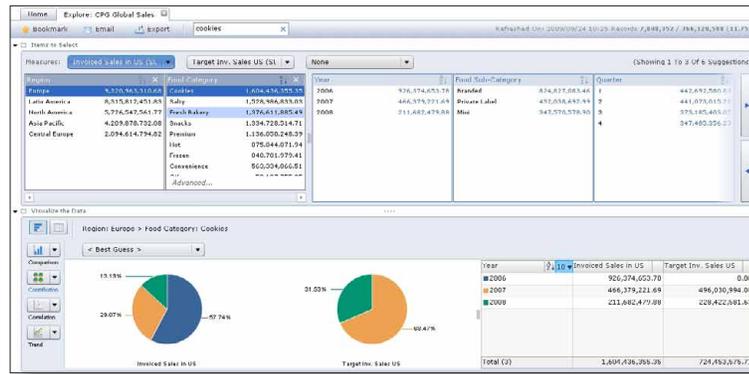
SAP solidified its position in the BI market in 2007 with the acquisition of Business Objects, a company offering several market-leading BI solutions and having more than 42,000 customers worldwide. The SAP BusinessObjects portfolio is extensive, including Xcelsius, which allows users to transform static enterprise data from virtually any source into rich, dynamic views, and Explorer, which provides users with an intuitive path to quickly search and explore data.

To provide customers with unparalleled user experiences and access to tools, the company regularly develops on the Adobe Flash Platform. “When we looked at our customer base, we saw that the Adobe Flash Player was on 98% of Internet-connected desktops,” says Thomas. “With the Flash Platform, we could easily reach as broad an audience as possible using an environment that was already very familiar to our developers.”

Bringing extensibility to a proven solution

According to Thomas, Xcelsius has been one of the company's fastest-growing product lines during the last three years. As demand for Xcelsius flourishes, SAP BusinessObjects continues to look for ways to introduce timely new features. The original Xcelsius solution was built from the ground up using a custom infrastructure, making it time-consuming to evolve, extend, and maintain. This prompted the company to rearchitect the software using Adobe Flex® Builder™.

SAP BusinessObjects uses the Adobe Flash Platform to maximize developer productivity and bring its popular Xcelsius and Explorer solutions to market more quickly. Flex and Flex Builder enabled creation of a dynamic front-end interface while LiveCycle Data Services ES lets developers quickly link Xcelsius with a customer's enterprise data. Users also can work with Xcelsius as part of a self-contained Adobe AIR application and connect later to enterprise data sources via the Internet.



“From a time-to-market standpoint, Adobe Flex Builder enables us to maximize developer productivity and helps us deliver the product in a faster, more iterative way,” explains Thomas. “It was a wise decision; prior to using the Adobe Flash Platform, the first versions of the products took us three years to build. With Adobe Flex Builder, we rearchitected the full product line in just eighteen months.”

With a dynamic, front-end interface in place, the company can then use Adobe LiveCycle Data Services ES to quickly link Xcelsius with a customer's enterprise data. On several occasions this has helped the sales team close more deals because a fully functioning prototype can be developed rapidly. “A proof of concept, especially with links to customer data, would typically take days,” says Thomas. “Using Adobe tools, it takes just a few minutes.”

To further expand the reach and benefits from Xcelsius, SAP BusinessObjects used Flex to develop an Adobe AIR widget that enables customers to work with data online or offline. Users can work with Xcelsius as part of a self-contained AIR application and connect later to enterprise data sources via the Internet to update BI models with new information.

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James Thomas,
Vice president of product marketing,
SAP BusinessObjects

A burgeoning alliance

The integration of the Adobe Flash Platform with SAP BusinessObjects solutions goes beyond Xcelsius to include SAP BusinessObjects Explorer. The powerful application provides SAP BusinessObjects customers with the ability to rapidly search and dig deeper into data—literally billions of rows of information—for a more comprehensive picture of any situation.

For example, executives using Xcelsius might spot some concerning trends with sales in certain regions. With Explorer, they can easily take this analysis one step further and quickly identify possible causes by filtering down data and identifying details on specific sales teams or product categories.

“By developing SAP BusinessObjects Explorer on the Adobe Flash Platform, we can evolve our product to stay ahead of customer needs, while providing users with high-impact, interactive, and productive experiences,” says Emmanuel Laborde, director of engineering for SAP BusinessObjects Explorer. “When our developers work with Flex, they can take a more creative, visual approach to building applications, and it shows in quality and interactivity of the end product.”

With the goal of transforming user experiences, the Explorer development team has built the application using Adobe Flex Builder, since the product's first release several years ago. “We focus on both function and finesse—so the overall quality of the user experience is critical,” says Saurabh Abhyankar, product director for Explorer at SAP BusinessObjects. “With the highly visual, yet incredibly simple interface, our customers gain faster insight into all aspects of their businesses and can devise more effective strategies.”

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Redefining how customers work with business data

With a focus on delivering enhanced customer experiences, SAP BusinessObjects is setting new standards for interactivity in the BI industry. Instead of simply slicing and dicing data or presenting data in static tables, the company’s applications leverage the Adobe Flash Platform to enable users to work in highly visual, slide-and-dial environments that are much more engaging and efficient.

“Using our BI applications is more like driving a car, whereas with other tools, users might feel like they are trying to fix an engine,” says Thomas. “Our users tell us it’s easy to find and explore data. With our solutions, virtually anyone can analyze business information.”

Today, SAP BusinessObjects is routinely adding new components and widgets, or integrating other environments such as Google Maps into its applications to further enhance user experiences. “Increasingly, our customers expect to access to a wider range of BI capabilities, anytime and anywhere,” says Thomas. “We need to be flexible enough to meet their needs, delivering dynamic BI tools that go with them wherever they go.”

For More Information

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