



Ceramica-Dolomite



Business Intelligence – Data Warehousing, Enterprise-Wide Data Sharing

About Ceramica Dolomite

With over 1,000 employees and sales of more than 160 billion Lire, Ceramica Dolomite is a leading Italian manufacturer of sinks, toilets, fixtures and accessories. Domestic sales constitute Ceramica Dolomite's core market, although the company has recently expanded into strategic international markets, including North and Latin America, the Middle and Far East.

Ceramica Dolomite's three manufacturing facilities use high automation to produce a wide range of products. At the same time, employees take extreme craftsman-like care in the finishing of each individual item. All Ceramica Dolomite products are rigorously tested to ensure that they meet severe international standards. Ceramica Dolomite is the first Italian company to receive ISO 9001 Certification. ISO 9001 is the highest level of certification for quality assurance in design, development, production, installation and servicing.

Ceramica Dolomite continues to invest in state-of-the-art technology to deliver world class products and customer service. The company's commitment to leading-edge technology extends to its information systems. Ceramica Dolomite utilizes the performance and reliability of its IBM AS/400 production systems for transaction based data processing, along with J.D. Edwards enterprise resource planning (ERP) software for financials, payroll, accounts payable and receivable, and warehouse management.

The Problem

The increasing globalization of its markets caused Ceramica Dolomite to reexamine its active business cycle and warehouse management software. The company soon realized that it needed to completely redesign its data analysis and business reporting system. Ceramica Dolomite required an information system capable of supplying its sales force and decision makers with easy-to-interpret sales data in real-time. The company determined that its information needs could best be satisfied by implementing a data warehouse application based on three basic principles:

- Transfer J.D. Edwards data from production systems to a dedicated server for query and analysis
- Implement a flexible decision support solution that enables full line-of-business reporting
- Release selected data to users across the organization using an automated scheduling system

They leveraged a Windows NT based data warehouse concept to provide knowledge workers and decision makers with flexible, user-centric access to corporate data for in-depth analysis.

Finding A Solution

Ceramica Dolomite's business intelligence solution consists of a dedicated Windows NT server running Microsoft SQL Server. Diesse Shop, a DataMirror business partner, was retained by Ceramica Dolomite to find the right combination of data replication and data access tools to quickly and effectively implement the data warehouse. After considering another software tool for data movement, Ceramica Dolomite selected DataMirror Transformation Server for loading and replenishing the warehouse with accurate, up-to-the-minute data. This innovative software solution extracts, transforms and replicates IBM AS/400 production data to Microsoft SQL Server warehouse tables. "Transformation Server provides the unique capability to modify and cleanse production during replication," explained Eligio Dodi, Managing Director of Diesse Shop. "Its powerful built-in data transformation and cleansing routines ensure that only clean data in a format conducive to query and analysis is consolidated in the data warehouse."

DataMirror Transformation Server is completely compatible with J.D. Edwards software used to drive Ceramica Dolomite's production systems. J.D. Edwards WorldSoftware is a powerful enterprise resource planning (ERP) package for transaction based data processing, but Ceramica Dolomite needed a way to deliver J.D. Edwards data into the hands of users. Transformation Server effectively extracts data from J.D. Edwards tables and replicates it to the data warehouse where it can be easily accessed by users throughout the organization.

The advanced selection, filtering and transformation capabilities of Transformation Server enable Ceramica Dolomite to join field content from the J.D. Edwards data dictionary to manage decimals, dates and UDC details. It easily enables J.D. Edwards users to translate values, derive new calculated fields, reformat field sizes, file names and date types. By converting Julian date fields used by J.D. Edwards software to ISO-standard year 2000 format, Transformation Server enables J.D. Edwards users to readily manage dates that cross the century boundary.

For business analysis and reporting, Ceramica Dolomite chose Brio Query Enterprise. The Brio family of presentation software enables users to develop the queries necessary to generate comprehensive business reports. These reports are then stored in a company repository where they can be readily accessed by the people who need them. The server modules of Brio Query Enterprise allow Ceramica Dolomite to schedule the release of sales and financial data to different users throughout the organization using the company's client/server LAN or the Internet.

Rapid Implementation and ROI

The ease of implementation of Transformation Server enabled Ceramica Dolomite to build an effective data warehouse application within a very short timeframe. It took less than three months to roll out the first version of a sales analysis application to users. "Both Transformation Server and Brio require no programming changes to existing applications and databases," said Eligio Dodi. "This ensures maximum return on investment (ROI) with minimum allocation of resources. The ability to program queries over time and automatically distribute reports throughout the organization has allowed Ceramica Dolomite to easily implement an effective solution for enterprise-wide data sharing and distribution."

Long Term Business Benefits

The data warehouse application has been fully operational since Spring, 1997. It has successfully redesigned Ceramica Dolomite's data analysis and business reporting system. Currently, twenty users are running queries and generating reports on sales and financial data using the companies local LAN network. An additional fifteen sales agents are accessing weekly sales data remotely using the Internet and Brio Broadcast Server.

Using Transformation Server, J.D. Edwards production data is transformed into meaningful information for query and analysis. Previously, knowledge workers and decision makers were required to work on rigid, pre-configured worksheets in order to conduct queries and generate reports. The real-time replication capabilities of Transformation Server have enabled users to easily access up-to-the-minute data and perform customized, user-centric data analysis. Brio Broadcast Server automatically distributes data to users both within the organization and remotely via the internet.

"The combination of DataMirror and Brio technology along with experienced consulting has enabled a real working business intelligence solution with seamless support for both J.D. Edwards and Windows NT environments," said Loris Dal Magro, Information Technology Manager, Ceramica Dolomite. "This total solution has helped us achieve considerable savings in electronic data processing (EDP) resources."

The Road Ahead

The data warehouse application continues to evolve. Ceramica Dolomite is currently extending the application to provide full query, analysis and reporting across the company's management control, administration and production systems. It will soon be adopted at all plants and applied to all business areas. Ceramica Dolomite also plans to migrate the business intelligence solution from the current client/server LAN to a pure Internet environment.

"Ultimately, Ceramica Dolomite estimates that 50-60 users across the organization will regularly access sales, financial and production data for decision support," Dal Magro concluded. "Transformation Server will continue to support all future enhancements to the business intelligence solution by loading and continuously replenishing the warehouse with clean, useable data in an appropriate format for end-user query and analysis."

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