The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

LOCATION:
Newton, MA, US

YEAR:
2011

STATUS:
Laureate

CATEGORY:
Human Services

ORGANIZATION:
Feed The Children

ORGANIZATION URL:
http://www.feedthechildren.org

PROJECT NAME:
Feed The Children leverages investment in QlikView for greater good

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Problem Feed The Children (FTC), one of the world's largest private, international relief organizations, delivers food, medicine, clothing and other necessities to people who lack these essentials due to famine, war, poverty or natural disaster. The organization annually distributes more than 111 million pounds of food and other essentials to children and their families in the US and internationally, supplementing more than 760,000 meals each day. With a wide global reach and a complicated, fast-moving supply chain, FTC faces several challenges in its mission to provide relief to those in need. The organization recently set out to improve efficiency in gaining access to system data and supply chain activity, with the goal of improving the way it tracks commodities and making better, faster decisions as to what, where and when to move supplies. FTC also needed a way to gain visibility into donor behavior – tracking trends and potential shortfalls to sharpen forecasts and focus fundraising programs. As a solution, the organization turned to QlikView, QlikTech's powerful, accessible Business Discovery platform that bridges the gap between traditional business intelligence solutions and standalone office productivity applications. The Technology FTC deployed QlikView to users within the organization in order to provide visibility into legacy donor management and supply chain applications. With QlikView, FTC now analyzes more than 70 million records in a fraction of the time it took before, and has eliminated one day's worth of batch processing time. QlikView's Business Discovery platform enables intuitive user-driven analysis that can be implemented in days or weeks rather than months, years, or not at all. The in-memory associative search technology it pioneered allows users to explore information freely rather than being confined to a predefined path of questions. QlikView's associative search provides a familiar search experience to deliver fast business answers. It provides instant results as you type, and its intuitive interface highlights important relationships within a data set. In just seconds, data can be translated into multiple formats – charts, tables, graphs, 2-D, 3-D, etc. FTC was already using QlikView for its commodities tracking system, but it wasn't until current VP of Information Systems, Cody Schilke, arrived that QlikView's true capabilities were

realized. Under Schilke's direction, the tracking system hummed at near real-time speed, improving the window into a commodities supply chain moving more than 111 million pounds of food and other essentials annually to all parts of the world.

SOCIETAL BENEFITS

QlikView is an important decision-support tool for Feed the Children as the organization reacts to need areas worldwide. When disasters strike, there is a logical order to what gets shipped out and when it ships. FTC relies on the commodities tracking dashboard to manage all of this quickly and efficiently.

PROJECT BENEFIT EXAMPLE

When Cody Schilke, VP of Information Systems, joined Feed The Children, he found QlikView wasn't being used to its fullest potential. "When QlikView was originally deployed, we used an ETL process to pull data from all of our systems on AS/400 into an Oracle database, where it would be normalized. This setup added a day's delay for business users to access the data. I knew QlikView's built-in ETL layer could pull data from our applications' databases natively which eliminated that extra step. As a result, we gained a near real-time access to the data." This real-time visibility led to greater efficiency in tracking expiration dates on perishable items across the organization. "Since we have shipments moving through the warehouses all the time, tracking what's going to spoil and when can be a very complex task, and one that needed to be managed from a central location," said Schilke. "We were able to do this easily with QlikView." The centralized analysis with QlikView has become an important decision-support tool for FTC. "QlikView helps us to comply with best practices," explained Schilke. "When there is a disaster somewhere in the world, there is a logical order to what and when you ship out. For example, you wouldn't ship building supplies to an earthquake zone before sending food, water or medical supplies." With the improvements to managing the supply chain established, Schilke and his team focused next on a Donor Dashboard to track all donations to the organization, whether monetary or gift-in-kind. FTC's donor management legacy system produced canned "green bar" reports that were cumbersome for users to navigate. They provided no context for data and information was nearly impossible to manipulate for any meaningful analysis. "When you provide users with a 25 to 30 column report, it becomes overwhelming and they lose their focus on whatever information the report may contain," reminded Schilke. "With the new Donor Dashboard in QlikView, users see quick graphic summaries of information and can easily drill down into the data, which gives them endless possibilities for analysis and adds tremendous business value by way of real user empowerment." The Donor Dashboard is used to track donation trends and provide forecasts, allowing FTC to predict where they may encounter shortfalls in the year. It correlates and monitors donor behavior which supports fund raising and marketing staff as they plan communications to the donor base. Deploying QlikView has had a significant impact on Schilke's department, replacing over 60 reports with intuitive, user-driven dashboards that put reporting and analysis into the hands of users. Schilke's team also created their own QlikView dashboards to monitor change management processes, asset tracking and help desk system, improving efficiency by more than 10 percent. Schilke's team is especially pleased with the high rate of user adoption for QlikView applications. "Use of QlikView is almost viral," said Schilke. "Once one person in a department begins to use it, others see the value and are clamoring for it."

IS THIS PROJECT AN INNOVATION, BEST PRACTICE? Yes