Granja Regina Speeds Insight by Months, Avoids New Hire Costs through Tableau

Granja Regina, a Brazilian agriculture and food products company, needed to enable improved performance insight. The company also wanted to free IT and analyst resources from constant reporting demands in order to focus on higher-value tasks.

FOUNDED: 1958
HEADQUARTERS:
FORTALEZA, BRAZIL

GRANJA REGINA PRODUCES AND SELLS HIGH-QUALITY AGRICULTURAL AND CONSUMER FOOD PRODUCTS ACROSS NINE BRAZILIAN STATES. GRANJA REGINA IS INVOLVED IN EVERY STEP OF FOOD PRODUCTION, FROM GROWING GRAIN TO FARMING LIVESTOCK.

0 New

HIRES

1 Month

SHAVED FROM WAIT TIME FOR CUSTOM REPORTS

Plenty of Data, But Not Enough Insight

Granja Regina's management needed a way to better understand performance across its agricultural and consumer food products divisions.

Granja Regina's ERP system, TopManager, connects with Microsoft SQL Server and PostgreSQL databases. Additional information was maintained in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. While TopManager has reporting capabilities, managers weren't satisfied with the caliber of those reports.

"Our executives and managers wanted to see reports with graphics," says Roberto Bertolini, CIO of Granja Regina. "So we used tools like Microsoft Excel to create what they needed."

This manual process was tedious, far too slow and placed a heavy burden on IT resources. "We were always having people coming to IT, asking us to develop reports for them," says Bertolini.

This process also pulled skilled analysts away from more strategic work for days or weeks out of each month.

"Our cost analysts struggled to bring data from all of the different data sources and then combine it in a report using Excel," says Bertolini. "The directors, the owners of the company— they need the information on a daily basis. But the cost analysts could only provide the reports once a week or even once a month."

As CIO, Bertolini had security concerns about this sensitive company data being distributed in a spreadsheet. "Leaving information in an Excel spreadsheet is not as secure as we would have liked," he said

In addition to databases and Excel spreadsheets, Granja Regina has data stored in third-party solutions, such as its human resources and agribusiness software.

"In some cases, we could not create the reports ourselves, but had to request that the software vendor create reports for us. That could take as long as a month," says Bertolini.

Looking for the Right Path

In 2011, Bertolini began the search for a better way. He spoke with a local software company about creating a custom data insight tool, but rejected

that idea due to the cost and time involved.

Bertolini then considered QlikView from QlikTech and the Pentaho BI Platform with Pentaho Interactive Reporting. Neither tool was exactly what Granja Regina needed.

"QlikView was cheaper than Pentaho, but you need SQL skills, so our managers would not be able to do things for themselves. Pentaho had a better user interface, but implementation would have been very difficult," says Bertolini.

Bertolini was invited to a Tableau demonstration held by local software reseller, PATH.

"Most of the CIOs in our city, Fortaleza, attended this meeting. PATH showed the capabilities and features of Tableau, and I was interested right away," says Bertolini.

"It Was Very Easy"

Bertolini invited PATH to come to Granja Regina to demonstrate Tableau to company stakeholders. After the demonstration, Granja Regina decided that Tableau Server was the solution he'd been looking for. The company deployed Tableau Server in December 2012.

"It was easy to connect and blend data from our various data sources," says Bertolini.

He points out that the company's databases were already clean and well-structured. "Our DBA here didn't have to work much [on implementing Tableau], because the sources were already good for playing with Tableau. All of the data sources—SQL Server, PostgreSQL, Excel—it was all easy to bring together and see in Tableau."

Granja Regina sent two IT resources and ten cost analysts and managers to training through PATH. "They learned how to use Tableau very quickly," says Bertolini.

After the training, the team got to work creating data visualizations and dashboard reports. "Most views took only a day or two days to create. The longest any of the reports took to create was three days," says Bertolini.

The team then validated that the Tableau reports addressed the questions that management hoped to answer. Once the dashboards were approved, the IT team published them to Tableau Server.

"We were done with everything from deployment to publishing the first set of reports by the end of January," says Bertolini.

Asking Questions They Might Not Have Asked in The Past

Instead of waiting days, weeks, even months for reports that could be out-of-date by the time they were received, Granja Regina leadership can see reports—updated daily—anytime they wish, quickly and securely.

"Now all of the data is integrated in a secure database, but the visualizations and reports are available—not just for that one user who has the Excel spreadsheet, but to anyone to whom we've granted the proper access to reports through Tableau Server," says Bertolini. Granja Regina uses Active Directory to control access to Server.

Four company directors are accessing Tableau dashboards using their iPads; Bertolini is working to provide mobile access to other Granja Regina employees. "Our sales managers already use tablets to take orders,

and we're working on sales target goal reports in Tableau that our sales managers will be able to access through their tablets when they're out working," says Bertolini.

"Company directors and managers are asking questions that they might not have asked in the past because they couldn't analyze the information that would have prompted those questions," says Bertolini.

"Now we have a BI tool that is being used directly by the business people."

And those planning meetings that used to be held only once each month, due to how long it took the cost analysts to prepare reports? "Now with Tableau we have that information updated on a daily basis, and those meetings are being held once a week," says Bertolini.

Freedom to Focus on Higher-Value Work

Now that a number of dashboard reports have been published to Server, the IT team is no longer diverted from core efforts by constant requests for reports.

"The IT team doesn't have to work much to build those reports. It's already done and available in Tableau," Bertolini says. Today, his IT team is able to focus on core efforts such as user support and database maintenance.

"Tableau is our Business Intelligence software. It's between the managers and the cost analysts—IT isn't involved as much. They don't depend on us."

Even better, Bertolini estimates that implementing Tableau has allowed him to avoid hiring several additional IT employees—which he would have been forced to do simply to keep up with the internal reporting demands.

Cost analysts are saving days and weeks of time that used to be spent manually creating reports.

"Managers are making better use of the cost analysts' time," adds Bertolini. "Our cost analysts can really work as analysts."