

# AMERICAN ELECTRIC POWER SPARKS BI KNOWLEDGE FOR 4,500 USERS WITH BUSINESSOBJECTS<sup>™</sup> KNOWLEDGE ACCELERATOR

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*Jessica Horst, IT Training Specialist, American Electric Power*



## Industry Utilities

## Business Process Development and training

**Business Pain**  
As part of its migration effort to leverage enhanced business intelligence and reporting technology from Business Objects, AEP needed to train 4,500 users and convert thousands of documents.

**Why Business Objects?**  
Customizable self-help training and ease of use helps AEP quickly adopt the advanced Web-based reporting technologies from Business Objects.

**Business Objects Products and Services**  
BusinessObjects XI Release 2

BusinessObjects Web Intelligence

BusinessObjects Live Office

BusinessObjects Knowledge Accelerator

## CHALLENGE

With 2006 revenue of \$12.6 billion and more than 20,000 employees worldwide, Columbus, Ohio-based American Electric Power (AEP) is one of the largest electric utilities in the United States. AEP delivers electricity to more than 5 million customers in 11 states, owns 38,000 megawatts of generating capacity, and maintains a 39,000-mile electricity transmission network. AEP initially deployed BusinessObjects<sup>™</sup> software from Business Objects, an SAP company, for centralized business intelligence (BI) reporting, looking to one tool to report against a wide variety of data sources and databases. As AEP's BI needs expanded, the company decided to upgrade to BusinessObjects XI Release 2 software, to take advantage of that release's advances in Web-based reporting, integration, visualization, and enhanced end-user capabilities.

As part of its migration effort, AEP needed to convert and test over 2,100 corporate documents and 30,000 personal documents, mostly developed using the full-client reporting tool BusinessObjects Desktop Intelligence<sup>™</sup>. AEP sought to ensure its end-user community received the training it needed to embrace the new technologies delivered with BusinessObjects XI Release 2, including BusinessObjects Web Intelligence<sup>®</sup> for Web-based query and analysis.

The conversion effort required BusinessObjects Desktop Intelligence users to quickly learn the BusinessObjects XI Release 2 solutions, especially BusinessObjects Web Intelligence. AEP's classroom training typically accommodates up to 12 students at a time. Although useful and desirable for some end users, AEP realized that instructor-led training of 4,500 end users – a dozen students at a time across multiple geographical locations – was impractical and costly. With a six-month window for migration, AEP was challenged to find a fast and cost-effective method of training its 4,500 end users.

## APPROACH

To expedite the training process and ensure user adoption, AEP looked to BusinessObjects Knowledge Accelerator, a customizable Web-based training program. "We needed a training and support tool that was flexible, easy to use, and readily accessible," says Jessica Horst, IT training specialist at AEP. "Knowledge Accelerator exceeded our expectations. It gives us AEP-specific BusinessObjects content, enabling our users to rapidly learn BusinessObjects and supporting them back at their desks." Along with accessing demos that simulate the AEP environment, BusinessObjects Knowledge Accelerator gives end users the ability to test their understanding of the Business Objects products. "Knowledge Accelerator met those needs by making it easy for our users to learn the technology and refresh their understanding as needed. Knowledge Accelerator also encourages end-user adoption," says Horst.

Using an AEP-specific training universe, AEP customized the BusinessObjects Knowledge Accelerator for BusinessObjects Web Intelligence training modules so examples reflect actual AEP environments. "Customizing the Knowledge Accelerator was easy to do, and it provided our end users with an environment that mimicked our Business Objects deployment," says Horst.

BusinessObjects Knowledge Accelerator also serves as a reference tool for individuals who participated in the instructor-led course but want to take advantage of the tool as a follow-up training option, to refresh and enhance their knowledge. “For individuals who participate in classroom training, the Knowledge Accelerator modules are an easy way to supplement their knowledge, and enable them to refresh their understanding at any time,” says Horst.

## RESULTS

AEP likes that it has the option of customizing BusinessObjects Knowledge Accelerator or deploying it out of the box. Since few employees will continue to use BusinessObjects Desktop Intelligence and BusinessObjects Live Office moving forward, AEP decided not to customize the training for those products. Rather, AEP uses out-of-the-box Knowledge Accelerator training modules. Whether working with customized Knowledge Accelerator training modules or out-of-the-box modules, AEP’s end users finds BusinessObjects Knowledge Accelerator easy to use.

“The Knowledge Accelerator helped us train a large amount of users in a short amount of time,” says Horst. “It’s also given us a more flexible training option that meets the training needs of many individuals throughout the organization.” End-user feedback regarding BusinessObjects Knowledge Accelerator has been positive. Users report benefits such as ease of use, self-paced training, the ability to illustrate how to use applications, and the ability to use BusinessObjects Knowledge Accelerator as a reference tool that reinforces in-class training.

AEP employees can access BusinessObjects Knowledge Accelerator training modules over the corporate intranet. “Our users like that they can choose when and where to take the training,” says Horst. A “Do-It! mode” within the BusinessObjects applications enables end users to access Knowledge Accelerator at any point during the reporting process. “Employees can access Knowledge Accelerator to review specific topics and then exit the program without worrying about completing or ‘passing’ a lesson,” says Horst. “The Do-It! mode guides users step-by-step on exactly what they need to do in order to be successful.” A side benefit of the Do-It! mode is reduced cost. Instead of having to call the help desk or consulting with a colleague – activities that carry associated costs – end users can take advantage of the self-help and ease of use enabled by Knowledge Accelerator.

Since users need to login to the intranet to use the training modules, AEP is able to see how many people are taking advantage of the training, and get a sense of the adoption among end users. AEP is still realizing the benefits of its migration efforts. “We wanted to have a product that was more than just a basic reporting tool, so people could actually create dashboards and have a Web-based environment,” says Horst. “Migrating users to BusinessObjects XI and BusinessObjects Web Intelligence gives us the advantage of the Web interface and superior analytics. BusinessObjects Knowledge Accelerator helps us achieve our user adoption goals more quickly.”

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