BOWERS & WILKINS

USING SAP® BusinessObjects™ EXPLORER SOFTWARE TO CREATE HIGH FIDELITY SALES REPORTS

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Paul Fryer, Business Systems Manager, Bowers & Wilkins Group Limited

QUICK FACTS

Company
- Name: Bowers & Wilkins Group Limited (B&W)
- Headquarters: Worthing, United Kingdom
- Industry: Consumer products
- Products and services: Speakers for home theater, iPod, and high fidelity systems
- Employees: 300
- Web site: www.bowers-wilkins.co.uk
- Implementation partner: Birchman Solutions Limited

Challenges and Opportunities
- Make sales data more accessible for an increasingly mobile sales team
- Reduce the time and effort needed for sales personnel to access timely customer and product information
- Boost sales and enhance customer loyalty via better insight into sales history and product availability

Objectives
- Provide accurate, standardized, Web-based sales data to field personnel via mobile devices in all regions of the world
- Enable field personnel to run reports and ad hoc queries with minimal IT support
- Give sales managers an improved view of sales performance, opportunities, and history
- Decrease IT time and effort needed to provide sales data to field sales organization

SAP® Solutions and Services
SAP® BusinessObjects™ Explorer™ software

Implementation Highlights
- Completed project in less than 8 weeks, with a small 2.5-person team
- Configured software to provide data on sales history, global planning, and forecasts to approximately 60 end users

Why SAP
- Simplified, standardized interface
- Compatibility with existing SAP software solutions
- Ability of software to run on mobile platforms
- Minimal requirements for training and IT support

Benefits
- Decrease in time needed to prepare for sales calls
- Increased ability for sales team to access and share relevant customer and product data
- Improvement in timeliness and accuracy of sales reports and queries
- Reduced need for IT support
- Integration with B&W's existing SAP software

Third-Party Integration
- Database: Microsoft SQL Server
- Hardware: HP
- Operating system: Microsoft Windows

Bowers & Wilkins

The high-end audio speakers made by Bowers & Wilkins Group Limited – or B&W – delight audiophiles around the world. However, with inconsistent processes governing the distribution of sales reports and product data, the company's salespeople were having trouble delighting B&W's customers. To simplify and standardize its sales data – and make the information accessible on the digital devices favored by its sales team – B&W implemented SAP® BusinessObjects™ Explorer™ software.

Amplifying the Business

B&W Group Limited is a small company with a wide reach. From its humble beginnings as a two-man hand-assembly shop in Worthing, United Kingdom, B&W now provides innovative high fidelity and home theater speakers to distribution chains, retailers, and consumers in key regions of the world. In addition to home-based speakers, the company also makes iPod speakers, headphones, subwoofers, studio monitors, and other audio devices. Audio quality – rather than price – is a key differentiator. Observing a "form follows function" approach, the firm's products often take on distinctive shapes – from tapering tubes to nautilus shells to "pregnant penguins."

With an emphasis on quality and craftsmanship, B&W has established a solid reputation among demanding customers – providing speakers for prestigious clients such as Abbey Road Studios, Skywalker Studios, Apple Inc., and Jaguar Cars Limited. Yet despite its reputation for well-crafted products, B&W's sales team was having trouble accessing the data it needed to prepare for sales calls and interact with customers.

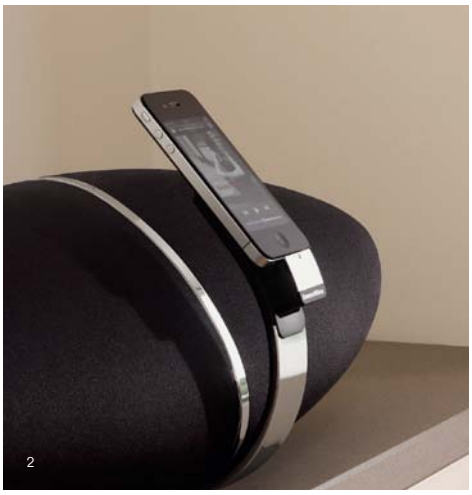
Putting the Right Data in the Right Devices

A long-time user of SAP Business All-in-One solutions, B&W has highly integrated applications that support its finance, inventory, design, and production processes while yielding excellent source data on logistics, product availability, and sales. However, the firm was struggling to make this data accessible to field sales people in a format they could understand and manage. Another hurdle: the need to supply data via the iPhones and iPads used by virtually all members of the sales team – from the vice president of sales down to each field salesperson. "We were using a standard set of sales report templates," says Paul Fryer, business systems manager for B&W, "but our salespeople found them way too dense – and they had trouble doing the simple ad hoc querying they needed to extract specific information." Equally troublesome was the effort required to access relevant data prior to customer meetings. B&W's salespeople, seldom in their offices, were struggling to prepare reports from remote locations. "Our field sales reps would have to print out reports from their hotels the night before visiting a customer," says Fryer, "and the reports they created weren't necessarily comprehensive or up-to-date."

The problem, according to Fryer, wasn't the data itself; rather, it was the somewhat cumbersome way in which reports were packaged and distributed to sales teams. Each region or division would import the data into Microsoft Excel or Microsoft Access, but there were so many versions of these products that it was difficult to establish common standards. "It was something of a Wild West atmosphere," says Fryer. "There were multiple versions of Excel and Access across different layers of our sales organization and other groups, and it all became overwhelming."

Tapping the Power of Business Intelligence Software

To tame the Wild West atmosphere surrounding its sales reporting, B&W selected SAP BusinessObjects Explorer, one of the many SAP BusinessObjects business intelligence (BI) solutions. While this BI portfolio contains a number of solutions designed to enhance data querying, reporting, and visualization, Fryer and his team were particularly impressed with SAP BusinessObjects Explorer – software that gives business users self-service access to relevant information. "We looked at several



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different alternatives," says Fryer, "but we felt that the capabilities around SAP BusinessObjects Explorer made it more compelling and more powerful."

For B&W, with its far-flung sales force, ease of access was a primary concern. "Our people are heavily dependent on the iPhone and the iPad," notes Fryer. "And what really sold us on SAP BusinessObjects Explorer was the ability to closely and quickly integrate sales data into both these products." Ease of use was another important consideration. "Our salespeople want to pull up client data and sales data very quickly and very easily," says Fryer, "and we felt that SAP BusinessObjects Explorer was the only solution that enabled us to do that."

With help from Birchman Systems Limited, a systems integrator and SAP partner, B&W managed the overall implementation process – from product evaluation to bringing users on line – in about eight weeks. Actual deployment of the software was accomplished in a matter of days. The implementation was handled by a lean team consisting of a single consultant from Birchman plus one full-time and one part-time member of B&W's IT staff. The solution – which currently serves approximately 60 people – was configured to supply data on sales history, global planning, and sales forecasts. All of the current users access the information via iPhones, while an additional 30% use iPads as well.

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Turning up the Volume

Although the implementation of SAP BusinessObjects Explorer has resulted in a tangible reduction in IT efforts needed to furnish sales data to field personnel, Fryer points out that the real benefits are found elsewhere. "This project wasn't really about IT cost savings," he says. "It was about being able to give our people what they want." In this case, what the sales team wanted was a simplified interface that provided an intuitive, Google-like search experience, and self-service access to relevant information. "With SAP BusinessObjects Explorer, I can sit down with our people and teach them how to use the software in 15 minutes," says Fryer. "It's very simple for our IT department and very simple for our end users."

Mobility is also paying substantial dividends for B&W's salespeople, any one of whom can now access sales and product data via a Web browser, and then analyze and manipulate the data to meet specific needs. The flexibility of being able to run reports anywhere in the world, at any time, and on any device, has made the sales team more productive and more effective. Not only do they spend less time preparing and running reports, they also have needed information at their fingertips. While cautioning that anecdotal evidence doesn't necessarily translate into bottom line results, Fryer says that B&W's salespeople are highly enthusiastic about SAP BusinessObjects Explorer. "One of our sales managers told me that, after using the solution on his iPad, he could commit to a million pounds in additional sales for the coming year," says Fryer. "That's because we now have timely data that's readily available – and we know we can trust it."

Looking Ahead

Building on the success and rapid adoption of SAP BusinessObjects Explorer, B&W is planning to extend use of the solution to its quality assurance and new product development organizations. The company is also considering making the software available to partners such as dealers, agents, and distributors. Having the right information at the right place – and in the right format – is critically important as B&W looks to fend off competitors and grow its business. "B&W is expanding geographically," says Fryer, "and being able to have relevant data at the point of sale or point of contact is a big benefit. We're confident that this capability is going to help us enhance our market leadership going forward."

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