IBM

A unified data strategy

The challenge

A leading water technology company delivers innovative water technology solutions throughout the cycle of water.

The Assessment Services division within this company was formed through six international acquisitions. As a result, the division faced numerous organizational challenges. There were multiple enterprise resource planning (ERP) instances and payroll systems, a lack of standard reporting, and siloed budgeting and forecasting processes that resided in a labyrinth of excel spreadsheets. Disparate and manual processes resulted in issues with timeliness and accuracy. The lack of clarity around data sources created an inaccurate understanding of organizational capacity and resources. Internal and external stakeholders felt the impact of late and misguided profit and loss forecasts.

Newly formed, the Assessment Services division of the water technology company also faced pressure to produce timely financial reports and accurate forecasts for the publicly traded company. It needed to improve and deliver upon earnings before interest, taxes, and amortization (EBITDA) targets.

The partnership

The Assessment Services division had a major data problem and turned to IBM for help. Together with ActionKPI and the Assessment Services Executive team, IBM charted an Integrated Business Planning roadmap with a comprehensive strategy to address data and organizational challenges.

The project was divided into two phases. Phase one included budget and forecasting, standardized monthly financials and management reporting, development of a data warehouse and financial data integration and operational reporting. Building on this success and momentum, phase two transitioned core sales and operational process and weekly forecast reporting from excel to planning analytics. This transition involved further data integration between Salesforce, ERP (sub-ledgers), Workday and numerous excel sheets combined with solid change management strategy to ensure adoption across sales, operations and finance functions.

Using IBM Planning Analytics and Cognos Analytics products, the team was able to transform the core workings of the Assessment Services division.

ACTIONKPI
PROFITABILITY ARCHITECTS

"I think the vision when starting this journey was to improve our process. Being a part of a public organization, we had to have very reliable data that could be produced in a timely fashion. We didn't understand the data sources coming in and how to manage those data sources, and part of that is we were in a very complex IT environment and our data came from many different sources and we didn't have a single ERP system. We had to find a way to bring that data into one spot to manage and make decisions from."

— Previous CFO at Assessment Services Division

"The culture, people and commitment to change within the Assessment Services division was paramount to their success and user adoption."

— Lance Tylor, CEO ActionKPI

The results

Top results from the partnership and solution included:

• Improved forecast accuracy and reduced forecast from 4 months to 1 week

• Decision making based on risk tolerance

• Integrated business planning on a single platform

• Greater transparency and trust in their data

• Centralized Project Management Dashboard for Project Forecasting and P&L Reporting

Successful use cases included:

• Produces a bottom-up financial forecast in under a week

• Evaluated financial performance and delivery of projects and associated project managers

• Held sales reps accountable to quarterly targets and forecasts

• Assessed client and forecast risk and set expectations at the corporate level

• Determined resource capacity, risk and backlog revenue

• Guided sales efforts and client negotiations based on capacity and insights in margin details

IBM Partner Ecosystem