

Laurentian Bank of Canada

Overview

■ Challenge

Provide branch employees with the information needed to successfully run their businesses

■ Why IBM?

The IBM® Cognos® solution had the flexibility, scalability and capacity for seamless integration across multiple data sources that Laurentian needed

■ Solution

A business intelligence (BI) solution incorporating a data warehouse, fast Web access to information for reporting and analysis, and scorecarding for the management team

■ Key Benefits

Improves decision making with accurate and timely access to information; enables personalized customer service with just in-time access to customer statistics and information; helps sales staff quickly refine sales strategies; allows delivery of new reports in days versus months; enables staff to answer ad-hoc questions in less than a day



Founded in 1846, Laurentian Bank of Canada is a Quebec banking institution operating across Canada, dedicated to meeting the financial needs of its clients through the excellence of service, simplicity and proximity. With more than \$17 billion in balance sheet assets and close to \$15 billion in assets under administration, the bank has 158 retail branches and employs more than 3,300 people.

A key component of Laurentian's success has been its dedication to capitalizing on its greatest asset: human capital. Integral to this strategy

was to make every process, including reporting, more efficient. To support this mission, the bank deployed an Oracle data warehouse to consolidate the data from over 20 different systems. The bank also chose to implement an IBM Cognos BI solution to provide employees with the information needed to do their jobs quickly, easily and effectively.

Challenges faced

Each Laurentian branch must contribute to the company's bottom line through yearly objectives.

“Our main goal was to provide branch employees with the information needed so they could successfully run their businesses,” explains Serge Couture, Senior Manager, Business Intelligence Competency Center, Laurentian Bank of Canada.

The bank’s IT department ran into technical challenges fulfilling branch and corporate requests for reports due to its diversity of legacy systems. “It was very challenging for us to consolidate all of the information at a customer level, since there was no unique customer identifier across the different platforms” says Couture.

This cumbersome process affected each branch’s ability to obtain its information in a timely manner, with requests often taking many months to fulfill. “With no timely reporting, and minimal information, the branches had to be very creative in order to meet their business goals,” notes Couture.

To overcome this challenge, Laurentian designed an infrastructure and technology platform supported by operational designs (a Business Intelligence Competency Center or BICC) to centralize reporting and deliver valuable information.

Strategy followed

Laurentian considered BI reporting solutions mainly from IBM Cognos and Business Objects®. The bank was attracted to the flexibility, scalability, seamless integration across multiple data sources, and self-service capabilities of Cognos products.

After getting up and running with its new Oracle data warehouse, Laurentian developed its BICC. This small, but highly effective team reports to the VP of Marketing. Its goals are to drive efficiency, increase delivery consistency, ensure deployment success, broaden the scope of the BI life cycle, and manage personnel levels. The new team’s objective is to roll out the complete BI solution through the corporation including the 158 branches.

Although the bank took the lead on its BI development, it worked with IBM Cognos partner Globalsult Inc. to help implement the solution. For the past two years this successful partnership has been helping with a variety of initiatives including ETL development, creating models and reports, and mentoring the team.

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*~ Serge Couture, Senior Manager,
Business Intelligence Competency
Center, Laurentian Bank of Canada*

Most recently, Globalsult helped the bank to centralize all ETL processes, using IBM Cognos 8 Data Manager, in order to obtain a better control over the different transformation jobs. Globalsult also participated in developing a pilot of its IBM Cognos scorecarding solution for the executive management team and the marketing department.

Additionally, Laurentian used IBM Cognos Software Services to ensure a successful deployment. Faced with a challenging security issue, Laurentian partnered with IBM Cognos Professional Services to develop a solution to secure all PDF reports distributed via the Web. It ensures that all PDFs could only be opened on the bank network and could not be saved locally or emailed outside the bank.

IBM Cognos Professional Services managed this whole project, from finding a solution, closely communicating with the vendor, and developing a proof-of-concept. “The project’s success is attributed to the technical expertise and understanding of our business shown by IBM Cognos Professional Services,” emphasizes Couture.

Taking advantage of Cognos Training, BICC team members were able to quickly get up-to-speed by participating in classes on Cognos Reportnet®, Metrics, and Data Manager. The bank has also relied on the Cognos phone support to quickly answer questions. “Cognos Support has been very helpful. We always get the answers we need,” notes Couture.

Since going live, Laurentian has standardized on IBM Cognos for all its informational reporting and business intelligence needs. Moving forward, the bank will complete the deployment of its IBM Cognos scorecarding solution and online reporting using the IBM Cognos 8 BI platform.

Laurentian then plans to continue the expansion of its IBM Cognos BI solution to its product management teams and to other corporate business lines. One of the bank’s next challenges will be to develop an executive dashboard. The bank anticipates ending the year with 50 percent more users because of the interest the online solution will create.

Equally important, the BICC team will continue working towards their goal of reducing the number of ad-hoc report requests by 80 percent by deploying the IBM Cognos 8 solution through the corporation.

Benefits realized

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With its IBM Cognos solution, Laurentian’s BICC is able to standardize its reporting process and provide the corporate office and branches with a single and complete view of their business. Bank employees are now able to access data that is more accurate and timely – data that was previously unavailable. As a result, they are able to make better decisions, manage closer to objectives, and support the growth of the company.

Reporting has also become more efficient and frequent with IBM Cognos. In addition to distributing nearly 40 standard weekly and monthly reports, Laurentian’s BICC is now able to respond to requests for new reports in a few days whereas before it could take months. Further, the BICC can also answer ad-hoc questions in less than a day.

Using the analytical capabilities in IBM Cognos with the data warehouse, Laurentian's credit and marketing departments have learned more about their customer base. Previously, this demographic information was not easily available. Department members can also create their own reports, saving the BICC from fulfilling three ad-hoc requests per week on average. "With IBM Cognos and our data warehouse, we now have just in-time access to customer statistics and information, which has helped us provide more personalized customer service," states Couture.

With IBM Cognos, Laurentian has gained a competitive advantage in the banking industry, where it is a challenge to expand client base and retain clients against some of the bigger banks. The bank's marketing team has used IBM Cognos to provide weekly feedback on its marketing campaigns, enabling it to easily change its strategy. Branch sales team members can also now easily monitor their progress against campaign goals with weekly performance reports. "With IBM Cognos, sales representatives are more proactive

and can refine their strategy at any point during a campaign, which they were not able to do as quickly before," explains Couture.

About IBM Cognos BI and Performance Management

IBM Cognos business intelligence (BI) and performance management solutions deliver world-leading enterprise planning, consolidation and BI software, support and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. IBM Cognos solutions bring together technology, analytical applications, best practices, and a broad network of partners to give customers an open, adaptive and complete performance solution. Over 23,000 customers in more than 135 countries around the world choose IBM Cognos solutions.

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