



KEY OUTCOMES:

- 1 An integrated financial planning, budgeting and reporting system, drawing data from sources across the organisation.
- 2 A robust and scalable tool, that easily on-boards new acquisitions into the business in a timely fashion.
- 3 An in-house team equipped with the skills and resources to maintain the reporting system on an ongoing basis.

WHAT WAS THE CHALLENGE?

A growing business, with an increasingly urgent need for insights and efficiencies.

CVS Group Plc is the UK's largest veterinary practice provider with over 300 veterinary practices, 5 laboratories, 4 crematoria and an online pharmaceutical arm. The business is growing quickly and CVS has experienced double digit revenue growth in the last few years with the majority of that growth driven by acquisition.

Led by Wei Fu, Head of Business Analysis, and Nick Perrin, Group Financial Director, the team at

CVS needed to address a number of challenges. In common with many organisations of this size, they faced a significant challenge with the sheer amount of data produced within the business.

"We have a vast array of data but we don't have timely or meaningful information," noted Wei.

In addition to this, historically, financial planning in the business had been based entirely on a complex structure of multiple spreadsheets.

BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS

Some of the key drivers for change and development at CVS include:

- Frequent acquisitions to the CVS Group demanded a flexible planning and reporting system to scale and quickly accommodate new businesses;
- The siloed nature of the systems across the business, e.g. Sage, ResourceLink and their Practice Management System, did not allow for truly integrated business planning;
- A reliance on Excel templates was causing a multitude of problems; as a planning and budgeting tool it was no longer meeting the demands of CVS Group;
- A group-wide strategy to become as self-sufficient as possible with regards to reporting and ensure some in-house capabilities to maintain the solution on completion of the project

THE LIMITATIONS OF SPREADSHEET PLANNING

The rapid growth and business complexities of CVS had exposed the limitations of Excel.

Not only were there the inherent problems of unreliable data entry, broken formulas and manual processes, but the particular structure and development of CVS had also uncovered a variety of specific challenges associated with planning in Excel.

“We have over 300 cost centres; that’s over 300 Excel templates which had to be distributed into the cost centre managers,” said Wei.

In addition to this, Wei said, **“At group consolidation stage, it was extremely difficult to carry out what-if analysis or scenario planning.”**

The challenges of planning in spreadsheets, combined with a recognition that CVS needed to break down their data silos, combined to present an overwhelming case for moving to a new system.

“Sempre’s consultants give us the best advice on technical issues – in addition to this, they also speak the business language in what is a very complex set up.” ”

Wei Fu, Head of Business Analysis



THE SOLUTION

IBM COGNOS & SEMPRE ANALYTICS

Knowing that a new solution was required to replace the disconnected, spreadsheet-driven environment, CVS evaluated a range of leading software options. After a rigorous selection process, IBM Cognos was chosen as their preferred solution. After recommendation from IBM, and a thorough assessment of their expertise and experience, Sempre Analytics were engaged to deliver the project.

“We had lots of independent siloed systems; Finance, HR and also our Practice Management system. In order to get meaningful, integrated information, we needed one tool to link all those systems. We will be using Cognos as a conduit to link all these databases” Wei noted.

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A FULLY INTEGRATED SOLUTION

Working closely with the in-house team at CVS, Sempre Analytics implemented a very successful first stage of the project – integrating Cognos with Sage. The result of this was a truly integrated planning and reporting system, providing them with profit & loss, balance sheet and cash flow reports. The Finance department can now report their actual results, as well as carrying out all their planning, budgeting and forecasting – all in IBM Cognos TM1.

“The clarity that Cognos brings to the reporting process enables the cost centre managers to plan better and review their results more proactively. As a result we are seeing better decision making and business management,” said Wei.

The second stage of the integration project was to report over their HR system, ResourceLink. ResourceLink was capturing a huge amount of data, but the built-in reporting structure was overly complex and was actually prohibiting the team from creating the reports they really needed. The team at Sempre Analytics linked Cognos Business Intelligence with ResourceLink, enabling the HR team to very quickly create key business reports. Data feeds to external providers such as Share scheme and Employee Reward schemes were also established, freeing up valuable hours from the HR team.

SELF SUFFICIENCY

One of the key success factors of this project was that the team at CVS should have some in-house capability to own the solution after the project was completed.

“The training we received was both informal and formal. The informal training was specifically

issue related, and so very relevant to our business requirements,” said Wei.

“The helpdesk is very responsive and reliable. The lead consultant and helpdesk have very close links – and if necessary the initial consultant is on hand to resolve issues on an ongoing basis.”

THE NEXT LEVEL OF BUSINESS INSIGHT

Having completed the integration of their financial system and HR system into Cognos, the next phase of this long term engagement with CVS is to address one of the principal information systems present in the business; the CRM system, Robovet.

By bringing Robovet into the integration project, CVS will be able to understand volumes and effectively analyse patient data.

“By integrating our CRM system, we should be able to understand our clients much better and predict future trends as well,” said Wei.

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In the future, CVS will ultimately be rolling-out reports right down to practice level to enable a level of reporting and practice engagement which would have been impossible before the Sempre project began.

“We’re really proud of the trusted advisor relationship we’ve built with the team at CVS; we’re really looking forward to being part of their continued success.”


Neil Harvie, Director, Sempre Analysis

“Sempre really took the long view in their relationship with us. They are very honest and we rely on their advice.”

Wei Fu, Head of Business Analysis



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