



Field Report: Flying High With BI

Sun National Bank

As companies look to extend BI applications to business users, it's important to add intuitive, graphical interfaces that let users better visualize the result of data analysis. Sun National Bank, a \$3 billion regional player, has embraced the trend toward visualization to better compete against larger banks.

Sun National wanted to use size to its advantage by responding more nimbly to change and outmaneuvering the competition. Because its 70 branches have local decision-making authority, Sun National wanted a data analysis tool with strong visualization capabilities to give branch management a better understanding of data and improved decision support.

In 2002, the bank began developing a data warehouse, based on Microsoft SQL Server, to ease trend analysis across data from several core processing systems. "We wanted to consolidate the islands of data, and we wanted one standard for the way data is calculated" says Louise O'Donnell, Sun national's vice president of management information systems.

In mid-2004, with data from its retail banking and loan products loaded into the warehouse, Sun National deployed Microsoft's Analysis Services tool to create various data marts. As with the main warehouse, Sun National loads the marts using Microsoft's Integration Services. The search for a visualization tool led to the implementation of software from ADVIZOR Solutions late last year.

"A lot of the [other] BI vendors we considered offered suites that would have raised the cost and made it almost unreachable," O'Donnell says. "We also needed a [visualization] tool that was robust enough to handle tables as large as 10GB. Some of the tools we tested were crumbling under the weight."

Sun National first gave analysts in the bank's finance and accounting units access to the ADVIZOR software, providing a suite of dashboard charts to manipulate and visualize both Analysis Services and SQL Server data. Users can add or change dimensions, such as different months or product lines, through a drag-and-drop interface. Users can also select among multiple graphical representations, including pie charts, bar charts or scatterplots, to visualize their analyses.

Analysts use visualization to monitor key performance indicators, identify trends and anomalies across multiple dimensions more quickly, and provide easy-to-understand decision-support information to both corporate and branch management. "It helps the business answer important questions such as 'What's the fastest-growing product?' 'Where's there a revenue decline or increase?' or 'How are different regions performing?'" O'Donnell says.

Although access to the ADVIZOR software is currently limited to analysts at headquarters, the bank plans to extend the deployment to business users at both the corporate and branch level. The bank hasn't projected a ROI on its investment in ADVIZOR which, at less than \$50,000, O'Donnell says was 'minimal.' However, she has identified big benefits.

"It has reduced the time required to pull together information from hours to minutes," she says. "No longer do analysts have to run their queries, collect all the data, churn the data and reformat it for presentation." —*Michael P. Voelker*