

U-Bix Konica Minolta Gets the Picture with Q4bis

The Business Intelligence Tool for the Manager



U-Bix has been the exclusive supplier of Konica office equipment in New Zealand since 1979. In that time, U-Bix has grown significantly and has consistently achieved the highest market penetration of any Konica dealer worldwide. With the merger of Konica and QMS Minolta in Japan and internationally, U-Bix followed suit and merged with Konica Minolta to form U-Bix Konica Minolta New Zealand in 2004.

U-Bix Konica Minolta currently has 400 staff in 13 locations throughout New Zealand selling and servicing their large customer base of Konica, Minolta, HP, OKI and Brother office equipment. Sales and customer support is overseen by 120 technicians. Service contracts are an important component of the U-Bix Konica Minolta product set. However, due to the way the business had evolved, getting hard facts about service contract profitability was proving problematic.

“Gathering data was not an issue,” says Tony Day, General Manager – Customer

Services for U-Bix Konica Minolta. “But getting useful information out of our AS/400-based Business Planner and Control Software (BPCS) ERP system was a nightmare. We would joke that once data went in, it would never return. BPCS running on the AS/400 was extremely reliable and great for what it was designed to do, but as far as a basis for Business Intelligence and management reporting, it was woefully inadequate. The reports that we were generating had so much detail that it was hard to see the forest for the trees.”

“We had been able to build some rather clever front-end routines with Microsoft Access and Excel that gave us some useful reports,” continues Day, “But the process wasn’t easy and the various routines were accessible to only a very select few within the company. Plus, as we shifted the data from one system to another, inconsistencies would pop up and often times the reports would not necessarily balance with the reports

“The use of Business Intelligence solutions will shift dramatically from dedicated analysts to all managers... spending 5% of their time using BI Software.”

*Predicted by
The Gartner Group*

Who Uses Q4bis in Konica Minolta

- ▶ Upper level management
- ▶ Sales managers
- ▶ Branch managers
- ▶ Finance officers

Benefits for Konica Minolta

- ▶ Increased profitability of Service Contract business unit
- ▶ Provides customised analyses on a daily, weekly and/or monthly basis
- ▶ Enhances and speeds decision-making processes
- ▶ Enables entire enterprise to access previously 'hidden' information

Associated Platform:

- ▶ BPCS running on an IBM iSeries (AS/400) platform
- ▶ SalesLogix CRM
- ▶ Microsoft SQL Server 2000

Q4bis Views:

- ▶ Variety of customised views across enterprise

Key Reasons Konica Minolta

Selected Q4bis:

- ▶ New CEO demanded better reporting and 'slice and dice' capabilities
- ▶ 'Proof of Concept' demonstrated practical, logical applications
- ▶ Site licensing and pre-configured views made Q4bis extremely cost-effective
- ▶ Q4bis fit neatly into AS/400 – Microsoft environment

generated by BPCS due to different logic and time-frames. We knew we needed to do something if we wanted to keep up with the marketplace."

Time for a Change

The catalyst for change was the service contracts. "Our new CEO was adamant about tighter controls," explains Day. "He wanted to see trends in our service contract profitability, a significant part of our business. He wanted 'slice and dice' capabilities and was unhappy with paper-based reports. He tasked our group with improving our analysis capabilities."

"We already had an excellent relationship with Trevor Middleton and his team of business consultants at Cosyn," says Day, "and they outlined various options for us. They recommended that we look at Q4bis. The more we investigated, the better it looked. The clincher was when they performed their 'Proof of Concept' (POC) demonstration for us. We provided them with some raw data dumps from the BPCS system and in less than a week Cosyn gave us a full demonstration of Q4bis with our own data. I immediately saw relationships, trends and patterns that I had no idea existed. I'd been looking at this data for years in various and sundry formats, but when I saw how Q4bis presented the information, I was sold."

Pricing was merely frosting on the cake. "Nobody has an unlimited budget," says Day, "but the fact that we could purchase a site license at a reasonable price point meant that we could roll out Q4bis across the enterprise for a fraction of what we thought we might have to pay. We'd already seen in the POC how easy it would be to extract the data from our AS/400 system so we knew we'd be able to implement Q4bis quickly and easily. The actual decision to go with Q4bis was a no-brainer."

A Fast Solution

"As it turned out, we were up and running in less than two weeks from the notice to proceed to generating reports," says Day. "We now run a data dump every night from the AS/400 into Microsoft SQL Server using their DTS function. Q4bis ties directly into SQL Server so we have a direct view into our entire database, updated daily. From there we can access all sorts of views and generate specialised reports to our heart's content, usually

"With Q4bis, we now can get the answers."

*Tony Day,
General Manager
Customer Services,
U-Bix Konica Minolta*

with just a few clicks of the mouse. We can track our various business units on a day-to-day or month-by-month basis and make adjustments accordingly. We now have much less stress at the end of the month when we have to do our regular reviews."

Q4bis has also extended the utility of their AS/400 environment. "Now that we can use the BPCS data on a regular basis," says Day, "we don't need to upgrade. We're very happy with the way the system works for data capture and storage and now we can actually use the data for business planning and decision-making. Q4bis has allowed us to concentrate on business improvement, not chasing information."

Customising Q4bis has proven to be equally stress-free. "We've been able to set up different views for different people, depending on their particular requirements," says Day. "It's really very easy. In fact, I personally have been able to build my own OLAP cubes for my own particular financial reporting requirements. The software is so simple to operate that it is actually more convenient for me to do it myself than to get the IT department to do it."

And what about the service contracts? "We've been able to tighten up our management of service contracts significantly," says Day. "We can now look at past performance in particular sectors and make much more accurate predictions in respect to costs and profitability. We can pinpoint which individual contracts or models are not profitable and design programs to address the issues and then monitor progress. In the past, most of our reports usually just resulted in more questions."

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