



Whistl switches to new data warehouse by Dimensional Insight

Case: Lower costs and granular reporting by consolidating old solution and Diver Platform

Quick Facts

- Organization:** Whistl UK, nationwide delivery management company (formerly TNT Post UK)
- Size** : 1,500 employees (2017)
- Challenge** : Cost reduction and provision of granularly detailed centralized management information
- Solution** : Data warehouse by Dimensional Insight Netherlands



"We share this longterm vision of observing results and risks based on trust."

- Lieneke Happel,
IT Director at Whistl UK Ltd

British delivery management company Whistl has reduced costs by 68 percent and improved its business insight by switching to a new data warehouse for management information. The organization turned to Dimensional Insight after its previous system had proved too complex and expensive. Lieneke Happel, IT director at Whistl, explains why she is excited about the switch.

Whistl collects, sorts, and processes business post and parcels in the United Kingdom. On average, the company processes around 75 million items a week. Actual delivery is taken care of by a third party. Whistl's services generate vast amounts of data, which could not be put to value optimally, until recently.

The new data warehouse provides some 200 Whistl employees with valuable management information. They are now able to generate ad hoc reports on various aggregation levels, without the need for support from business intelligence experts. Information can be as detailed as item number, item weight, and processing time.

Motive

The main reason Whistl wanted to replace its previous data warehouse was to reduce costs. The Microsoft solution had turned out to be too extensive and therefore too costly in terms of software licensing. IT director Happel attributes

this to the former implementation partners and their traditional view of servicing. "The Microsoft Gold partners chose a limited scope, pursued short-term profit, and strictly held on to the steps predetermined by the vendor."

A second motive for switching was the old system's incapability to provide detailed reports. "Even though Whistl generates a lot of production data, end-users could not consult granular details at all. They were not able to zoom in on the desired level of detail. We started looking for a self-service reporting tool that would allow users to point and click for further details. One that would become the centralized reporting tool for information to operations and any other department. A single pane of glass for everyone."

Wider perspective

In the end, Happel turned to Dimensional Insight Netherlands. This Leiden, Netherlands-based IT vendor consolidated the aforementioned Microsoft solution and its previously implemented business intelligence tool Diver Platform into a new data warehouse.

"Dimensional Insight's experts have been regulars here for more than 10 years and know our organization. They've approached this new project from a much wider perspective. For them, it's not just a single project. We share this long-term vision of observing results and risks based on trust."

The new management information system brings transparency to all levels of data, like parcel tracking and customer volume details. "This is very different from the past," says Happel.

Implementation

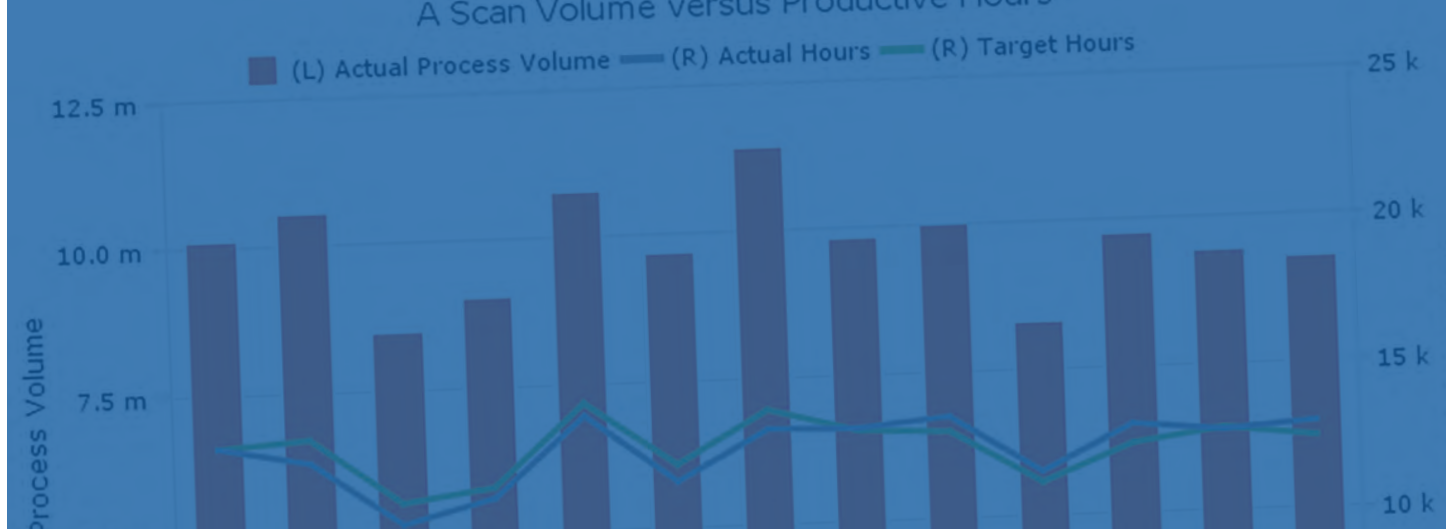
"Implementing the new data warehouse went very smoothly," Happel continues. The project kicked off with Whistl and Dimensional Insight jointly defining its scope. "I like the way the Dimensional Insight team thinks outside the box. When you're in the midst of business, your thoughts tend to follow certain patterns. The team challenged us and helped us stay focused. One of the results was our request to the business to critically reconsider what functionalities the system should require."

Dimensional Insight developed the platform following the agile principles of step-by-step creation and close monitoring along the way. For the Whistl team, it was the first introduction to agile software development. "It was a very pleasant introduction. The experts from Dimensional Insight contributed largely to this."

Once the foundation was in place and the main reports had been defined, the project team began migrating all source files from the old platform to the new one. During this process many unknown and illogical exceptions were found, such as ill-documented customer-specific discount rules. It took some time to figure out how to include them in the new solution.



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Risks

Like the implementation, the switchover to the new data warehouse went smoothly. After running both data warehouses simultaneously for one week, Dimensional Insight turned off the old one for good. This happened two months ahead of schedule.

“One can never rule out every risk of turning off, but we’d tested it very thoroughly,” says Happel. “I like taking calculated risks, just as the Dimensional Insight team does. Fortunately I had full support of my fellow Whistl board members. They understood this project would lead to significant cost reductions.”

Cost reduction

The new data warehouse has lived up to its promise. According to Happel, the switch has resulted in a 68 percent reduction of cost, compared to the previous solution. Costs of software licenses, maintenance, and support have dropped significantly. Whistl’s business intelligence team is no longer required to repeatedly generate dozens of reports, which only a few people use.

“The same number of employees can now do much more than before. They add value by designing new relevant reports that really serve our business.”

Happel is very enthusiastic about the commitment by Dimensional Insight Netherlands. “We find the team very competent. Whistl’s pre-existing relationship with the team only got better. They understand our business, they challenge us, and they share our focus on long-term results. Whistl’s success is their success.”

About Dimensional Insight

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Contact information

Dimensional Insight Netherlands BV
PO Box 11027
2301 EA Leiden Netherlands
phone +31 885148800
www.dimins.nl



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