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NCN® Embraces Self-Service BI to Provide End-Users with the Ability to Instantly Generate Their Own Reports and Dashboards

Summary

NCN® is the national leader in cost management for out-of-network claims and network enhancement. NCN uses cost-based data and transparent reporting to maximize savings on healthcare claims. NCN's technology solutions are powerful, data-driven tools, which achieve rational, cost-based reimbursements and their services aid in controlling costs on more than $2 billion of healthcare claims each year.

Last year, NCN initiated a search for a more efficient internal reporting solution, and researched several business intelligence vendors before selecting InetSoft's Style Intelligence. Among the deciding factors in NCN's selection were simplified query creation, ease of use, drag-and-drop interface, automated reporting, and visualization dashboards.

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Problem/Challenge

Over the course of a decade, NCN accumulated over 1.5 million rows of data for internal reporting on a relational database, and used a relational database management system (RDBMS) to access their data. In order to create internal reports from the database, the Business Intelligence (BI) Manager had to spend approximately three to four hours daily researching, writing, and executing SQL queries. After extracting the appropriate data, the BI Manager was then tasked with several more hours of analysis and ultimately placing the data into a suitable format for presentation and distribution.

Another challenge NCN faced was providing business users access to their data in a timely fashion. In order to create reports, employees first submitted IT tickets wherein a series of very specific instructions were provided and subsequently executed by a member of the IT staff. However, because new questions would often arise after the report had been delivered, employees would then have to resubmit an IT ticket requesting a revision of the original report. This delayed the efficacy of decision makers and created a backlog in the IT department.

Solution/Requirement

NCN adopted the InetSoft Style Intelligence platform for several reasons. First, Style Intelligence is able to seamlessly connect to relational databases through both data models and queries. Data models are created in an interactive drag and drop environment allowing for a great deal of flexibility across large schemas, while queries provide precise control over requests sent to the database. Queries can also be created using a Query Wizard, thereby eliminating the need for knowledge of SQL.

Another central component of the Style Intelligence solution is the Scheduler. The Scheduler is an administrative stand-alone application that allows users to run specific tasks at a specified time. Therefore, users are able to specify the time reports and dashboards are generated, establish a delivery method (email, print, save to disk, archive, etc.) and determine the most suitable presentation format (PDF, Excel, HTML, etc.). Both administrators and end-users are able to access the Scheduler, thus providing an important level of self-service.

Lastly, Style Intelligence provides advanced dashboards that encourage business users to freely explore and experiment within an easy-to-use, self-service environment. Hypothetical business scenarios can be simulated, and existing data can be inspected, tested, and analyzed from a variety of angles; guiding users toward asking questions that return valuable and actionable information - all without the assistance of IT staff. For large dashboards, materialized views can be enabled allowing for added responsiveness and quicker analysis at run-time.

Customer Value

Style Intelligence has proven to be a tremendous asset to NCN's internal operations. NCN's BI Manager is now able to create queries in less than fifteen minutes. As a result he is free to perform a greater degree of analysis rather than writing queries and formatting reports. Additionally, business users are able to create their own dashboards from the data they select, thereby ensuring that the information they rely on to guide decisions is at their fingertips at any given time. Style Intelligence has also brought the following organizational benefits:

- The BI Manager has gained back approximately twenty hours per week. As a result, he is free to focus on data analysis and discover areas for improvement and growth, pinpoint where they are coming from, and report those findings to senior leadership.
- The Scheduler has freed up network resources by running reports and materialized views overnight and automatically sending reports to users the following day in the appropriate format.
- Dashboards have provided the dual benefit of allowing business users to access and model their data as/when needed, and freeing IT from the burden of constantly creating and revising reports for business users.

Due to overwhelmingly positive feedback throughout the organization, NCN is currently planning to provide more users with access to Style Intelligence with the goal of providing self-service BI to everyone from the President of the company down to data entry employees.