

T-Formation Adopts Operational BI to Maximize Self-Service and Increase Profits

Company Overview

Founded in 1987, [T-Formation](#) is a privately owned and operated one-stop shop for apparel production. T-Formation is ranked as the 3rd largest volume printer in the United States. Its facilities manage customer orders throughout the production lifecycle to include custom design, development, production, and shipping. T-Formation works with organizations of all sizes and types, from Fortune 500 through non-profits, universities and smaller businesses.



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Business Challenges

T-Formation uses a single database to manage their data, including everything from data entry and sales through production, order management, and shipping. Their in-house order system solution provided limited reporting functionality. Even though end users were able to export data to manipulate within spreadsheets, business visibility remained limited. This traditional form of reporting did not allow decision makers to get to information easily. Although the system handled all sales, general ledger, artwork management, production schedule, statistics, shipping, receiving, and invoicing, linking this data in a way to identify opportunities was not easy. Consequently, the organization knew there were areas they were unable to successfully analyze and wanted to implement a tool that would allow business to see – at a glance – whether they were making a profit and how they could manage their contracts more efficiently.

Data Discovery Solution

In order to gain broader business visibility, T-Formation downloaded a [trial version](#) of InetSoft's Style Intelligence in early 2012. After the initial 60 days of use, they decided to implement the software based on its high level of interactivity and quick time to value. After 4 months of use they have 10 dashboards that are used throughout the organization. InetSoft helped T-Formation by connecting the desired data, and the first dashboard was up and running within the week. With 10 concurrent end user licenses, business users are able to interact with dashboards to the level of detail they require and get access to the information they need without having to export and manipulate data.

T-Formation has used InetSoft dashboards to monitor overall sales performance, incoming sales, view production schedules, analyze customer order histories in varying levels of details, and also pulls any data on the fly. Dashboards are built with [drill down](#) functionality so that users can look at overall performance with the ability to drill through to individual customers – to be able to look at whether a customer is profitable, or look at a single order to answer questions related to pricing, such as based on the price that we sold this offer for, how profitable is it. Currently, one person is in charge of building up a set of dashboards to deliver to users across the organization.

Benefits and Challenges

T-Formation has seen many benefits in their short time using [Style Intelligence](#). Within a very short time, T-Formation has used their dashboards to increase efficiencies and profit within their organization. They have changed some of their pricing models based on their analyses after finding out that depending on product pricing and order size, not all order were profitable for the company. In addition, to identify which customers are profitable, T-Formation was able to break down the process to identify efficiencies within the lifecycle, which enabled them to optimize their pricing models to increase profits as well as make complementary changes to overall manufacturing schedules. Also, to increase efficiencies even further, discrepancy logs were created to track anomalies in production or within business processes to ensure higher productivity.

In addition to impacting their bottom line based on their dashboard use, their quick time to delivery and [high levels of interactivity](#), helped give decision makers the ability to interact with information independently on a high level as well as by drilling in to individual orders or customers to understand the cause and effect of potential issues.

Although a very successful implementation, challenges currently exist based on the learning curve required to expand use. With the goal of expanding to include what-if scenarios, dashboard development requires in-depth knowledge that takes time to acquire without mentoring/consulting hours from InetSoft. Consequently, it may take time to expand into additional use cases and expand dashboard use in the immediate future.

Lessons Learned

One of the key lessons that T-Formation learned was that better visibility and high levels of interactivity can help them run their business better. Aside from selecting a solution that provided ease of use independent of IT and quick time to delivery, InetSoft dashboards enabled users to change the way the business was run to ensure an increase in overall profits. In order to do this effectively, corporate culture has to be open to change. T-Formation is a great example of an organization that took advantage of their BI use to change the way the organization is being run. Not only did they use the information to change pricing and improve profits, but they also made changes to production schedules to improve efficiencies.