

Squeezing relevant data out of SAP

An SEI-CMM Level 5, PCMM Level 3 and ISO 9001 company, Mumbai-based Siemens Information Systems Limited (SISL) is a Systems Integrator and Total Solutions Provider. SISL provides software solutions to a global clientele in the areas of telecommunications, healthcare, manufacturing, the public sector, utilities and government. SISL's esteemed lineage from Siemens and Siemens Business Services, Europe's undisputed leader in IT, provides it the exclusive benefits of being able to constantly identify newer opportunities and exploit emerging technologies to fulfill the IT needs of diverse businesses globally. It is also the largest provider of SAP R/3, an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution, in India.

In supporting the critical business lifeline of its clients, SISL required flexible and dynamic analysis of data, which could help give itself a competitive edge. Given the constraints of the IT infrastructure, the IT department did not encourage proactive analysis on the SAP server because repeated requests for data on the network would adversely affect its performance. Technical issues notwithstanding, the senior management was concerned about the reliability of the support information generated through manual intervention of data. The other concern was that the data generated by these databases could not be combined with the non-SAP data on the SAP terminal, which necessitated this analysis to be done separately. That meant that SISL had to dig into other databases that prevented it from getting the complete picture of the business trends that lay buried in its databases.

SAP R/3 is mainly used for online transaction processing (OLTP) and operational reporting. Although the data is stored centrally in Mumbai, the BI applications had to distribute right information to right knowledge workers, who are spread across 5 locations all over India, without making repeated calls to the central server. The BI application, therefore, had to address complex data distribution and security issues. Since SISL provides ERP solutions to its clients, timely access to data and optimum network performance are critical to the success of SISL's clients. Also, it is critical for SISL to access data from the SAP, and other databases that it uses, in a dynamic and seamless manner. In other words, it wanted to turn the information that was already available on the network into knowledge that could help in competitive advantage at the marketplace.

Business Intelligence Applications (BIA) developed by Pranal Consultants, India, using CA's CleverPath Forest & Trees, allow users to squeeze more information out of SAP R/3. The solution gives SISL the ability to leverage investments in SAP implementation instantly. With its

easy-to-use graphical interface, the solution allows SISL the flexibility and ability to dynamically analyze vital information from SAP, Corporate Intranet and other external sources, enabling managers, analysts and salespeople to make timely, faster and better business decisions. Says Anil Laud, Managing Director, Siemens Information Systems Ltd, "CleverPath Forest & Trees has given us an opportunity to extract just the right information, online, at a touch of a key and, most importantly, Forest & Trees has presented information in a way which makes assimilation so much easier."

The solution focuses on providing information to the MIS users, while SAP reports give information to the operational users. Most importantly, it helps convert data, that is already present in a network, into a business asset that can help with competitive advantage in the market and

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generates error-free MIS reports.

By using BI, SISL has saved significant cost of additional SAP licenses for operational reporting and, by providing seamless access across geographical locations from a centralized server, it has optimized the use of server, network and human resources. With the advantage of being a BI solution that starts delivering without investing into comprehensive data warehousing solution, CA CleverPath Forest & Trees also managed to save time during the implementation. The solution generates alerts and proactive support, necessary in decision-making, and allows data to be incorporated from various non-SAP sources. This gives the decision makers the ability to analyze information from different perspectives, including marketing and profitability analysis. Now data can be analysed across product category, sales force, regions, time period etc.

SISL uses BIA to leverage transaction-processing systems, distribute valuable financial information and free up time to convert financial information in order to understand trends and relationships. The directors, the departmental and commercial managers at SISL use BIA for performance monitoring and controlling. Financial analysts, controllers, reporting managers and other in finance use BIA for consolidation and management reporting. 