



Business challenge

To make smart decisions, firms must understand their own profitability. A complex revenue and cost structure forced Brett to perform arduous spreadsheet work to gain true visibility of expenditure.

Transformation

For construction firms, gaining a clear view of cost drivers is extremely difficult, as there are dozens of variables involved. Equipped with a powerful IBM Analytics solution, Brett has enabled automated, rapid reporting on key metrics across its business, helping the company identify and pursue the most profitable courses of action.



Daniel Partington
Key Business Analyst
Brett

Business benefits:

2 days

per month saved on reporting frees up time for more value-add analysis

Transforms

commercial decision-making with real-time insights into profitability

Enhances

cost control with more accurate management of rebates and haulage transactions

Brett Landscaping & Building Products builds a rock-solid foundation for smarter decision-making

Brett Landscaping & Building Products is a significant sector of the Brett group, one of the largest independent construction and building materials groups in the UK.

"We can use IBM Analytics solutions to drive better commercial decision-making based on hard evidence."

Terry Bollard, Finance Director, Brett Landscaping & Building Products



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Overcoming complexity

“A clear view of profitability across your business is essential to making smart commercial decisions concerning how to price your products and where there are opportunities for your business to expand,” begins Terry Bollard, Finance Director at Brett Landscaping & Building Products. “But when your cost structure is complex, gaining an in-depth understanding of profitability across different divisions can be extremely difficult.”

Brett – one of the UK’s largest independent construction and building materials groups – found itself maintaining a huge and increasingly unwieldy set of spreadsheets to manage revenue analysis and costs including rebates and haulage.

Terry Bollard comments: “At 186 million records, our spreadsheet environment was simply no longer sustainable and prevented us from gaining a true understanding of the relative profitability of different activities.



“For example, rebates form an essential part of our industry, and we must manage rebate agreements with our customers that range in complexity from relatively simple to highly complicated.

“Before, we were duplicating effort by maintaining rebate spreadsheets per customer and a separate calculation of rebate costs within our company-wide spreadsheet.”

Brett must also coordinate a complex set of factors to optimize haulage – the transport of goods between locations – to minimize costs.

Daniel Partington, Key Business Analyst at Brett, explains: “We rely on a fleet of trucks to transport goods between our facilities and customer sites. We work with our external haulage provider to balance conflicting factors such as average order size, total load size, distance travelled and the type of vehicle to control our costs, but lacked the visibility we needed to do so effectively.”

Finding an expert partner

Brett engaged Assimil8, an IBM Premier Business Partner, to help it build an Extract, Transform and Load (ETL) solution to collate data from its ERP system and third-party rebate and haulage data. Next, the company deployed IBM Cognos® Business Intelligence analytics software, which enables rapid, automated reporting, and set up a selection of automated business-critical reports.

Daniel Partington says: “Assimil8 provided us with an excellent service during the implementation. We are continuing to work closely with the Assimil8 team as we expand our use of analytics into more and more areas of our business.”

Terry Bollard adds: “We were impressed by Assimil8’s willingness to work with highly complex third-party data, helping us create a tool that offers timely, accurate insights into costs and profitability.”

Faster results, deeper insights

With the powerful automation solution, Brett can now perform complex calculations of rebates, haulage costs per customer and other metrics at the touch of a button. In addition, Brett can automatically generate reports in a huge variety of units – such as per square metre, tonne, or bag – to deliver tailored order information to suit different customers.

After receiving a high-level report, commercial analysts can examine the data in detail by drilling down into the figures. This enables them to pinpoint the root cause of any variances in sales, margins, costs, and differences between budgets and actuals faster than ever before.

Daniel Partington continues: “In the past, our sales directors could only look at costs, sales or margins on a monthly basis.



“At the beginning of each month, they also had to wait around a week before they could access the previous month’s figures to give us enough time to complete the reports. Now, they can examine figures between any two days of their choice, and information is available in real time – a huge improvement.

“Better still, our business users can slice and dice the data in any way they choose – such as by sale, customer, region or postcode – and create ad hoc reports to gain deeper insight. Cognos has enabled us to create very user-friendly reports, encouraging people from all areas of the business to incorporate analytics in their everyday decision-making.”

Automated reporting has also unlocked huge time savings for Brett’s analyst team and given more parts of the business access to analytics.

“Previously, I spent two days every month manually compiling reports; today, Cognos creates the same reports at the touch of a button – saving me ten percent of my working hours,” remarks Daniel Partington. “By spending less time on preparing our data and more time on analysis, I can invest more time in helping my colleagues get the answers they need.”

Crystal clear view of the business

With highly accurate insight into its operational costs, Brett can strengthen its position in a competitive industry.

Terry Bollard says: “The IBM solution has given us a more accurate picture of our profitability than ever, down to a very granular level, giving us a more precise view of how the business is doing and eliminating a lot of the manual work we used to have to do.

“Today, we can answer questions such as: ‘what are the impact of individual rebate agreements on our profitability?’ and ‘are we optimizing our logistics parameters?’

“We can use IBM Analytics solutions to drive commercial decision-making based on hard evidence rather than gut instinct, leading to better outcomes. As our industry becomes increasingly competitive, finding accurate answers to questions like these provides real advantage.”



Solution components

- IBM® Cognos® Business Intelligence
- Assimil8

Take the next step

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