



Semper BI: Marine Corps rely on IT Service Management, Business Intelligence solution

The Organization

In September 1941, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune became the home of “Expeditionary Forces in Readiness.” In the years since, it has become home base to other expeditionary forces, support commands, logistics groups, and combat units. The mission of the base remains to maintain combat-ready units for expeditionary deployment.

To help prepare war fighters for combat and humanitarian missions abroad, Camp Lejeune takes advantage of 156,000 acres, 11 miles of beach, 34 gun positions, 50 tactical landing zones, and 3 state-of-the-art training facilities. The base and surrounding community is home to nearly 150,000 people and generates \$3 billion in commerce each year. Base services include childcare, education, shopping, and more.

One vital function supporting primary base functions—combat, command, support, logistics, commerce and education— is Information Technology. The MAGTF IT Support Center (MITSC) is responsible for supporting, maintaining, and improving IT services, operations, and infrastructure—a significant task, considering both the importance and global reach of its systems.

Like most IT organizations, MITSC faces constant pressure to deliver and support more services, while providing increasing capacity and availability—despite shrinking budgets and reduced access to key resources. To address these challenges, and following the Corps’s tradition of proactive resourcefulness, MITSC continually pursues best practices plus proven processes and technologies.

Challenge

Operational managers needed real-time access to metrics to effectively manage and optimize scheduling and availability of critical operational resources. They also needed detailed reports that identified potential risks associated with modeling and planning IT infrastructure changes and the supporting data for ongoing root cause analysis. In addition, executives needed key performance indicators to drive decision-making. Faced with these challenges, MITSC partnered with Column Technologies, a global

FAST FACTS

ORGANIZATION

United States Marine Corps

INDUSTRY

Government / Military

SOLUTION

IT Service Management with fully integrated Business Intelligence

RESULTS

Removal of significant IT bottlenecks; enabling improved IT planning, decision-making, and service support and delivery.

“Today there are many more stakeholders and at more levels of the organizational hierarchy. Our customers – including the USMC – need on-demand, real-time, web-based access to operational information as well as management summaries and historical trend analysis for executives. Jaspersoft Business Intelligence is the right fit.”

Sam Friedman
Business Intelligence
Practice Manager
Column Technologies

CASE STUDY

leader in providing IT Service Management solutions. Column led an effort to identify, plan and implement best-practice Incident Management, Problem Management, and Change Management processes, together with supporting technology from the BMC Remedy IT Service Management application suite.

BMC Remedy ITSM is a powerful, scalable and extendable application suite that natively supports the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) guidelines and yet is flexible enough to adapt to customer requirements.

“Effective planning, management, decision support, and root cause analysis depends on turning IT support data into actionable business information,” says Sam Friedman, Business Intelligence Practice Manager, who ran the project for Column Technologies. “If you want to maintain or improve performance then you need Business Intelligence.”

Column and MITSC also understood that business intelligence is not simply for management reporting. There are stakeholders at all levels of the organization. Operational support staffers need real-time, detailed data that can help them quickly restore normal service operations. Management needs periodic summaries that identify whether IT is performing adequately and meeting targeted service levels. Executives need access to historical trends and leading indicators showing whether the policies they put in place are producing desired outcomes.

The team determined that making these kinds of information available would require an enterprise class Business Intelligence technology, integrated with core BMC Remedy ITSM workflow applications.

Creating a Business Intelligence Solution

The BMC Remedy solution is composed of multiple tiers:

- a Microsoft SQL Server database that stores all customer data,
- the Remedy ARS application server that drives workflow and brokers all data transactions, and
- Remedy Mid-Tier server that provides user access from a web-browser.

BMC Remedy provides a robust, user-friendly interface for operational support staffers to log and track the events and procedures related to Incident Management, Problem Management and Change Management processes. However, extracting that information for reporting or analysis has its challenges. To rely exclusively on the BMC Remedy interface means that anyone, even managers or executives, who needed the information would have to learn the BMC Remedy application, a tool better suited to operations or technical employees.

CASE STUDY

The use of operational tools to access information poses other problems. For example, a technical user might rely on manual procedures to export data from BMC Remedy into Microsoft Excel for offline processing. But when users are free to formulate their own queries and calculations, trust and accountability in the data can suffer; it becomes impossible to trace the path from a row in a database to a cell in a spreadsheet.

BMC Remedy includes a pre-built web connector designed to integrate with the popular Crystal Reports application. Although the initial plan was to implement reports on that platform, closer analysis revealed challenges with the pre-built web connector:

- **Initial costs.** Delivering browser-based reporting access, while technically feasible, would involve substantial licensing costs from an additional product, Crystal Reports Server.
- **Scaling costs.** A highly scalable Crystal Reports solution would require an additional piece of technology, SAP BusinessObjects Enterprise—resulting in excessive technical complexity and additional, cost-prohibitive licensing.
- **Support Compliance and Compatibility.** The pre-built web connector is incompatible with the current releases of Crystal Reports and SAP Business Objects Enterprise. Furthermore, the connector only works when those products are deployed on a Microsoft Windows platform— not Linux or UNIX.

Advanced Business Intelligence. While the team decided to initially implement standardized, self-service reports, it also identified future Business Intelligence needs:

- Ad Hoc Reporting would enable non-technical users to write their own reports without needing to learn Crystal Reports, SQL, or the complexities of the Remedy database.
- Dashboards would enable managers to monitor multiple key performance indicators on a single screen.
- Analytics would allow non-technical business analysts to perform advanced, incremental queries with interactive filtering and drill-down capabilities.

MITSC preferred that all of these requirements be met with a single, integrated, and cost-effective solution. For these reasons, the Column Technologies team considered other BI platforms, quickly settling on the Jaspersoft Business Intelligence Suite (JBIS). This solution includes operational reporting, a rich graphical report design tool, an easy to use self-service report design and analysis interface, report scheduler, dashboards, and flexible analytics combining in-memory and OLAP-based techniques.

CASE STUDY

Other JBIS advantages include its ease of installation, configuration, and integration. The wizard-based installer and web-based management screens reduce time needed for installation and configuration. Its 100% lightweight Java architecture means it can be deployed in a wide range of operating environments, and support for JDBC, JNDI and NetBeans means there is infinite opportunity for potential data sources – not just BMC Remedy ITSM applications.

Additional tools and techniques were added to deliver a robust and integrated business intelligence solution. An open source JTDS driver connects directly to the BMC Remedy database, and the Column BI Connector for Remedy provides two essential functions:

- **Decode Remedy ARS Data Types.** Column has designed a number of database tools that translate proprietary data types, decode the data dictionary, and enable robust time series reporting.
- **Embedded Reporting.** Column has designed an application that enables Remedy users to preview, run, or export real-time, context-driven reports directly from within a Remedy form.

Lastly, Column used its expertise in ITIL business process metrics, its understanding of MITSC business requirements, and skills with Jaspersoft Business Intelligence technology to develop a portfolio of strategic reports. Examples include:

- **Incident Work Effort Report.** This report shows how much effort is spent restoring critical IT service operations. It enables managers to calculate the labor cost of maintaining critical systems. This information can also be used by executives to drive budgeting and staffing decisions.
- **Incidents with Mean Time to Resolution (MTTR).** This report shows elapsed time to restore critical IT service operations. It enables managers to calculate availability of key services and estimate customer satisfaction. The report can also be used by executives to drive policy decisions on which services warrant priority.
- **Open Incidents.** This report shows detailed operational metrics for unresolved incidents, enabling managers to make real-time, fact-based decisions that ensure the highest priority incidents are addressed first.

Now, MITSC operational Support Staffers have been empowered with on-demand access to real-time, context-driven reports directly from the BMC Remedy forms. Managers and Executives have access to tactical and strategic reports from a user-friendly, web portal.

Administrators can schedule the reports for automatic execution and email distribution. Or, they can set reports to archive on the server for auditing or historical reference. Additionally,

anyone with the appropriate permissions can export the reports to PDF, XLS or CSV formats for offline viewing.

Results

The MITSC, Column Technologies, and Jaspersoft teams worked well through the implementation. “There were a number of technical issues—some even prompting us to request enhancements to Jaspersoft products,” says Friedman. “In every case, Jaspersoft was extremely responsive. The support we got throughout the project was terrific.”

The resulting solution significantly improved MITSC’s ability to provide timely, responsive support to the base’s user communities, and to effectively manage IT infrastructure resources across their lifecycles.

Just as importantly, the advanced reporting capabilities have been equally well received. The BI implementation enabled non-technical managers and analysts who needed incident and infrastructure change information to serve themselves—without pulling operational support staff away from their primary duties to manually generate reports, and mitigating the need for executive-level decision-makers to spend hours in training.

“Essentially, the solution cuts out a significant bottleneck in IT,” says Friedman. “With Jaspersoft, managers are now empowered to produce their own reports whenever they want them.”

Moving forward, the MITSC team, with Column Technologies’ assistance, plans to expand its Business Intelligence solution to incorporate other IT processes such as Asset Management, and to add functional capabilities including ad hoc query, dashboard, and analytics. When they are ready to do so, MITSC will find that the technology is already in place— it needs only to be enabled and configured. There will be no need to purchase or install any additional software.

Column Technologies is proactively integrating Jaspersoft Business Intelligence with its core solutions. “Ten years ago, reporting was an afterthought. Today management information is the justification for our solutions,” says Friedman.

“And, while Crystal Reports is a powerful tool, it can also present certain challenges, including a high cost of scaling and a requirement for extensive skills to develop reports. Today there are many more stakeholders, at more levels of the organizational hierarchy. Our customers – including the USMC— need on-demand, real-time, web-based access to operational information as well as management summaries and historical trend analysis for executives. Jaspersoft Business Intelligence is the right fit.”

Conclusion

The Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Lejeune must be ready to deploy 24X7, 365. Camp Lejeune's Commanding Officer and the MITSC unit rely on Column Technologies and Jaspersoft to deliver on their mission - to ensure that our Marines can be first on the scene, in times of disaster, crisis or war.

About Column Technologies

Established in 1998, Column Technologies is a global technology, management consulting, and services company with proven success across the public and private sectors. Column's success comes from long-term relationships, aligning our goals with our customers, and a collaborative approach that integrates people, process, technology, and support. Our end-to-end approach enables governments and companies to improve service and efficiency while lowering costs and risk. Headquartered in the United States, Column has 275 employees and offices in Australia, India, Singapore, South Africa, and the United Kingdom as well as a global partner network. For more information on our products and services, please visit www.ColumnIT.com. or call +1.866.265.8665.

About Jaspersoft

Jaspersoft provides the most flexible, cost effective and widely deployed Business Intelligence suite in the world, enabling better decision making through highly interactive, web-based reports, dashboards and analysis. Leveraging a commercial open source business model, Jaspersoft provides end-to-end BI capabilities at a fraction of the cost of other vendors. The BI suite includes pixel-perfect enterprise reporting, ad hoc query, dashboards, OLAP and in-memory analysis, and data integration. Jaspersoft is the only BI vendor that enables companies to adapt to the new, virtualized world by providing a complete spectrum of on-premise, multi-tenant SaaS and cloud-based deployment options for both embedded and standalone business intelligence. Unlike traditional BI vendors, Jaspersoft is built on a modern, light-weight, standards-based architecture and offers greater vendor independence thanks to its open source codebase. Unlike niche BI vendors, Jaspersoft represents a safe choice with tens of thousands of production deployments across a wide range of industries.

Jaspersoft's open source business intelligence software has more than 11 million product downloads worldwide, 160,000 production deployments in 100 countries and over 13,000 commercial customers. Its BI suite is advanced regularly by a development community of more than 150,000 registered members. For more information visit: www.jaspersoft.com and www.jasperforge.org.

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