

Grimco Inc. | Unlocking the power of Business Intelligence



CLIENT SUCCESS STORY



New BI system means better access to data—and more hours in the day

It's every busy executive's dream—to get more hours out of the day. That dream came true for Grimco Inc., a sign products wholesaler headquartered in Missouri. A new Business Intelligence system designed by Advanced System Designs of Morton, Ill., gave them back almost an hour every day—at all 16 locations—for a time savings of nearly 80 hours a week.

"We're always in the market for ways to get more data faster," says Grimco general manager Keith Pittillo. "We're big believers in using information to make qualified decisions about our business. We spent a lot of time running queries to get data about our customers, our products, the regions we cover, vendors, even accounts receivable and payable. Not only was it time-consuming, it slowed down our system."

An ASD seminar, "Access iSeries data with Microsoft Desktops for a powerful Business Intelligence Solution," got Grimco intrigued about the possibilities—but they still weren't convinced that BI would really make a difference in their business. So ASD proposed a prototype. "We said, 'Let us show you the power,' and they agreed," says Keith Liszewski, leader of the ASD Microsoft practice. "We reviewed their current system and got to know their business needs, then accumulated some of their data and built a prototype in our Customer Technology Center in Morton. Then we demonstrated it for them so they could see the potential benefits."

The positive response was immediate. "We were definitely enamored," says Pittillo. "We couldn't believe the amount of data you could have in front of your face in just seconds. It didn't take us long to get on board."





“The entire company feels privileged that we got the chance to work with ASD. They became more than just a technology partner. They’re our business partner.”—Keith Pittillo, General Manager, Grimco Inc.

Technology People

- Executive Scorecards and Dashboards
- Query and Data Analysis
- Enterprise Reporting
- Data Mining and Statistical Analysis
- Desktop Integration

Business Results



The Power of BI

Grimco has always recognized the value of data. The more they know about their business, the better equipped they are to make the right decisions. Managers spend time every day running queries and studying reports.

“We have 25 different product groups and 16 locations,” says Pittillo. “We have a lot of data. And we have always used that information to make decisions. So that part of Business Intelligence isn’t really new to us. But we never realized how much time we could save—and how much more useful our information would become—with a total BI solution.”

For example, the new reporting system calls out exceptions, letting Grimco see trends in sales instead of having to sort through all the data to identify opportunities. “With so many different product groups, we don’t want to look at every sale to see where the growth is coming from. The new system lets us see which groups are profitable and which aren’t—so we know what to push or phase out.”

Grimco sends delivery trucks out every day—filling orders and taking new orders in all 16 locations. With the new BI system, they can study the activity in those locations every day. “Our data tells us which zones are up and which are down,” says Pittillo. “So if business is down, we’ll send a salesperson out to visit customers, make phone calls, see what we can do to get that business back.”

The company also uses BI reporting for accounts receivable. “Customers who have outstanding bills for more than 60 days are put on hold and not allowed to order until their balance is paid,” explains Pittillo. “Now we know on the 61st day who to put on hold, who we need to call on to get things taken care of.”

Quick turnaround

Once Grimco saw the power of the SQL Server BI solution and decided to implement a solution

of their own, it took just a few weeks for ASD to add some additional features to the prototype and turn it into a working system.

Grimco already had the necessary capability, with IBM iSeries eServer, SQL Server, and Microsoft Office on the desktop. And ASD has years of experience and knowledge of the iSeries and the SQL Server BI solution, which means it takes fewer hours to build and implement a system.

A new data repository on an Intel server takes the pressure off Grimco’s iSeries, the most critical server they own. The iSeries, which runs the entire business, still holds the data, but having the data repository on a different server frees the iSeries to process other workload.

“One of their reports took 400 different queries on the iSeries and took several days to complete,” says Brent Hoover, leader of the ASD BI practice. “That was a lot of stress on the server. The new repository will increase the longevity of the iSeries and allow expansion into new business areas.”

And queries are run automatically during the night so the system isn’t affected during business hours. New reports—already prepared in a easy-to-use spreadsheet format—show up first thing every morning.

Technology partners—and business partners

One of the most important services ASD provides doesn’t have anything to do with information technology—it’s business consulting. ASD consultants spent time going over Grimco’s business model and learning what information is important to the company—a process that impressed the Grimco staff. “Brent Hoover is an extremely knowledgeable guy,” says Pittillo. “He didn’t just talk about the technical side. He has a keen business sense; in fact, I think after this project, he may know our business as well

Technology People. Business Results.

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We create Business Intelligence solutions that enhance your success today and in the future. First we study your business, then we design the solution, implement the architecture, and select the software and hardware required to get the job done.

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as we do.”

With his understanding of Grimco’s business, Hoover was able not only to incorporate the data they requested, but also come up with some new ideas. “He was suggesting things we’ve never even thought of,” Pittillo says. “We’re all excited by the possibilities.”