



## Case Study - Implementing a Proactive System Storage Strategy in Healthcare



### Allina Health System

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Minneapolis, MN

### SOLUTIONS USED: APOS STORAGE CENTER

#### BACKGROUND:

**Allina Health** is dedicated to the prevention and treatment of illness and enhancing the greater health of individuals, families and communities throughout Minnesota and western Wisconsin. A not-for-profit health care system, Allina Health cares for patients from beginning to end-of-life through its 90+ clinics, 12 hospitals, 15 pharmacies, specialty care centers and specialty medical services that provide home care, senior transitions, hospice care, home oxygen and medical equipment, and emergency medical transportation services.

In 2016, Allina had 27,536 employees, 1775 staffed beds, 109,091 inpatient hospital admissions, over 90,000 surgical procedures, and 4.5 million clinic visits. From these figures alone, it is easy to imagine that they depend heavily on their SAP BusinessObjects system to document and inform patients, staff, and executives.

The Allina BI team manages SAP BusinessObjects for its own facilities and for those of affiliates. Multi-tenancy, EHR integration and a 10-CPU deployment make for a complex administrative scenario, which derives further complexity from the ongoing SAP BusinessObjects upgrade path. They are currently on BI 4.2 SP4.

#### CHALLENGE:

Allina has been a long-time BusinessObjects customer, and have grown from the earliest deployment of 3 users to approximately 12,000 users across all capacities within the organization. The BI team administers about 50,000 reports and hundreds of thousands of instances, and they recognize content can be both an asset and a liability. Content is a critical asset that enables and supports countless decisions across the



organization, but it also presents a significant liability as reports and instances must be curated, managed, secured, protected, upgraded and migrated. Concerns about such liabilities and responsibilities for system content led the Allina BI team to find ways to strengthen their system storage strategy, and it was through this initiative that Allina pursued, evaluated, and then deployed APOS Storage Center.

An effective and thorough system storage strategy should take numerous content scenarios into account, including accidental content deletions, accidental content changes, version rollbacks, system cleanup, migration readiness, and governance, compliance & audit readiness.

The first of these, **accidental deletions**, was the initial challenge for Allina Health to address in establishing their content storage strategy, as the pain of recovering mission-critical content was something they had already experienced on several occasions. On these occasions, BI users had accidentally deleted reports and folders, and the BI team was tasked with recovering them. Such recovery was not a simple task, and Jordan Deschene, a system administrator with Allina, described one such occasion to us:

A couple of years ago, someone on the reporting team, which is responsible for designing and maintaining not only Allina's reports, but also those of Allina's affiliates, accidentally deleted a critical report folder belonging to one of the affiliates. In a single stroke, 80% of their reports were gone, rendering their EHR system reporting unusable. The folder had to be recovered, but doing so would not be easy. Allina told the affiliate that it would take between 10 and 20 days to restore their report folder. The affiliate replied that this was 'not okay'!

The BI team had two options: acquire the necessary staging hardware on which to restore the complete system and promote the restored system to production; or do a full restore of the system database, which ends up recreating literally millions of folders, because of the way SAP BusinessObjects nests them. In this case, Allina's BI team used the second option, and managed to restore the report folder in a couple of days. However, because the system was being restored from backup tapes created some 12 hours before the report folder was deleted, it was very difficult to bring the system up to date, and numerous cases of double-billing occurred. These double-billings took as much as six months to resolve. Thus, the impact of this one deletion had far-reaching consequences, about which Deschene noted:

It's hard to quantify how much time was lost, because the impacts of the deletion and the recovery effort touched on so many different areas of the business, but it's easy to see that the APOS Storage Center solution would very quickly pay for itself in dealing with scenarios such as this, and this was one aspect of our business case for purchasing Storage Center.

With a clear understanding of the negative organizational impact and high costs of such events, Allina deployed **APOS Storage Center** to manage these risks. The system back up and selective restore capabilities of Storage Center enabled the BI team at Allina to restore a specific report, set of reports, folders, or any other system object confidently and easily in the event the objects were mistakenly deleted from the system.



While accidental deletions were the prime motivator that started Allina on the search for ways to become more proactive in their system storage strategy, they were also aware that there were other system storage issues of which they needed to be aware, and which Storage Center addresses.

**Accidental content changes** can be equally as damaging as accidental deletions. When a user makes a change to a report and saves that change, it overwrites the previous report object. This is a very common scenario for Web Intelligence reports where the saved change forces an overwrite on the Production system. For Web Intelligence deployments where report changes can be even moderately frequent, it becomes important to have **report versioning** options available so that one of a number of previous report versions can be easily restored.

**Automating system cleanup** is another capability that a proactive system storage strategy should embrace. Setting rules by which to back up content automatically, and then have it safely removed from the main system, helps to ensure that the system is streamlined, and the content liabilities associated with having to manage unused and unnecessary reports are reduced. System streamlining and automated removal of unnecessary reports and reports instances brings significant advantages for **Migration readiness**. In addition, the removal of unnecessary content allows users navigating the system to find and access relevant content more quickly.

Developing the capabilities for **content promotion** between deployments is another important aspect of your system storage strategy. It is very important that when you promote content you are not promoting merely the content. The content should be promoted with its folder structure and the promoted reports, instances and schedules should be able to inherit the security settings and backup rules from the original deployment location.

Finally, **governance, compliance and audit readiness** have increasingly become issues for BI teams as regulatory demands grow and organizations implement a culture of compliance, complete with compliance officers. Automated, rules-based archiving of content can go a long way toward ensuring that your organization is audit-ready by default.

Allina Health's decision to implement APOS Storage Center has not only resolved their initial issue with recovering accidentally deleted reports and folders, but also placed them in a good position to continue building a long-term, comprehensive and proactive system storage strategy that addresses these issues as they evolve and new issues as they arise.



### WHY APOS STORAGE CENTER?

Jordan and the BI team did their research and due diligence before selecting APOS Storage Center.

We started researching third-party solutions to this problem, because there was no good way to tackle it through the SAP stack. We have long been aware of the solutions that APOS brings to market, and we've used freeware from APOS in the past. I started looking into APOS Storage Center as a potential solution, and attended APOS webinars on the solution.

Jordan was pleased not only with the APOS Storage Center solution, but also had high praise for the APOS support team:

We have always felt confident that APOS support will be there for us when we need help. It is especially good that we deal with the same support person each time we call. And it's not just when it is an APOS software problem: if it is demonstrably an SAP software problem, APOS is still there for us to help resolve it.

Formed in 1992, APOS Systems is a global provider of solutions which enable well managed business intelligence. APOS solutions improve the return on your BI investment through enhanced BI platform management, providing automated and simplified administration, detailed platform auditing and monitoring, robust archive, backup and restore capabilities, enhanced content publishing and distribution, detailed BI query awareness and controls; and targeted solutions to speed and streamline your platform migrations.

APOS solutions simplify, automate, complement and extend your BI platform management practices.

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