Case Study

**Complex, High-Volume Report Scheduling & Distribution
in a Multinational Retail Organization**

Harvey Norman

Australia

SOLUTIONS USED: APOS PUBLISHER

BACKGROUND:

Harvey Norman is one of Australia's leading retail brands. Harvey Norman operates a chain of approximately 250 retail stores across Australia that focus on Harvey Norman's four primary lines of business, computers, electrical appliances, furniture and bedding.

As a one-stop destination, Harvey Norman offers a range of solutions for every room in the house, including the latest innovative technology for the home and the home office. Harvey Norman is consistently one of the most recognizable brands in Australia, with multi billion A$ sales revenues.

Harvey Norman also operates in New Zealand, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Singapore, Slovenia, Croatia and Malaysia.

CHALLENGES:

Recently, Harvey Norman underwent a broad SAP business transformation program which they called *Reload*. As part of this program, they implemented a centralized SAP BusinessObjects reporting solution and a SAP BW on HANA data warehouse. The SAP BusinessObjects deployment replaced a large number of legacy, standalone Crystal Reports deployments with outdated hardware.

Reload Program Manager Richard Arkell described the situation they were facing:

> We had a 'burning platform' situation with the Crystal Reports deployments at the store and there had always been an issue in comparing the store-based Crystal Reports with the head office BI system, because they were never really synchronized at the same point in time. The organization lacked a single version of the truth.

Harvey Norman chose a transformation that would include store-level and centralized business intelligence reporting based on a centralized data warehouse, with real time message-based data feeds, providing a single version of the truth for the whole organization. and making the store data available to corporate users for analysis.

The new, centralized system replaced all of the disparate, store-based reporting systems, providing Harvey Norman with a single version of the truth.

However, this centralization created new challenges that threatened to disrupt their ability to share that single version of the truth. By centralizing the BI function, they also centralized the challenges of volume and complexity.

Volume

The first hurdle the Reload team had to overcome was the radically increased volume of reports that now had to be managed centrally. Each franchise has a large number of scheduled reports - daily, weekly, monthly, etc., and managing all of these schedules created a heavy administrative workload. With the new centralized reporting system, Harvey Norman runs around 15,000 schedules every night, with monthly peaks close to 25,000 reports.

Complexity

A further, and more difficult challenge was how to assign a printer to each of the 3,500 store-based users. Prior to the Reload project, it was an easy task when the reporting solution was store-based and each store had three of four printers to choose from, but the new centralized solution needed to have a valid list of printers to which to send the reports for each users, and ad hoc users needed to be presented with a list of

only the printers that were available to them locally. They also needed to be able to send reports to destinations other than printers, such as network locations and email.

In summary, Harvey Norman faced three seemingly intractable problems:

1. Scheduling around 15,000 reports per night with limited administrative personnel;
2. Assigning each of their 3,500 users to a valid printer; and
3. Sending reports to other destinations, such as network locations and email.

These volume and complexity issues were not simply inconveniences: the project could not be completed without these issues being resolved. Richard told us "we had a big issue, which, quite frankly, we hadn't understood until we were a fair way into the project, and we could not see a path toward resolving the issue. If we did not have a way to manage the schedules, then we did not have a workable solution." Solving these challenges became critical to achieving the project's objectives and realizing their return on investment for the organization.

SOLUTION:

Harvey Norman considered numerous options, including workarounds and in-house development against SAP SDKs. Eventually, they escalated their issues to SAP via their consulting partner, SAP account and product executives, who directed them to APOS.

After discussions with APOS solution consultants, Harvey Norman found that the **APOS Publisher** had all of the capabilities needed to resolve their volume and complexity issues. However, there was one further requirement that posed a problem: they required that APOS Publisher's distribution module be integrated with the SAP BusinessObjects interface. This requirement seemed at first to be a show-stopper, since the SAP BusinessObjects interface is closed, but, working closely with SAP personnel, APOS was able to overcome this last obstacle and attain the required integration, thus meeting all of Harvey Norman's requirements and removing the remaining obstacles to the completion of the BI portion of the Reload project. Richard commented:

> If we hadn't been able to deploy the APOS solution, we wouldn't have been able to deliver a final product that met our requirements so completely and elegantly. With the APOS solution in place, we were able to deliver the sought after single version of the truth, and we were able to retire the store-level burning platform and avoid a complete re-architecting at the local level, which would have incurred major costs. With the new centralized BI solution in place, the information available to

analysts is quite transformational, and the benefits continue to accrue. This was a complex project, and the APOS integration addressed a very complex piece of the puzzle.

WHY APOS?

Richard admitted that they had some reservations about undertaking this project with APOS.

> First, we felt that there was some risk posed by the geographical distance and differences in time zones. We weren't sure we could work together, sight unseen, across vast distances, and get the support we needed to make this critical part of the project successful. Second, we were worried that APOS would not be able to deal with the complexity of our requirements, and the sheer volume of the reports we had to deliver. However, after making a few reference calls, and after hearing how quickly the APOS people understood our challenges and how to meet them, we were convinced that the APOS solution was the right one for us. We have been very pleased with the support we have received during and after implementation of the APOS solution. APOS support people have shown a "can-do" attitude, and we have had no communication problems in a situation where the risk of poor communications was high, and potentially disastrous.

One unexpected but welcome benefit to the implementation of APOS Publisher came in the form of capital and operating savings on printers. The implementation led to a printer rationalization project, which saw Harvey Norman replace approximately 5,000 printers with a small number of advanced multi-function printers, allowing them to control costs more easily and making their local IT environments more practical.

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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