Executive Summary

BKB: Farming insights

BKB cultivates relationships to develop platforms for agricultural trade in South Africa. But it needed to maximise business intelligence to prevent the wool being pulled over their eyes.

Growing agri-business

BKB has been at the forefront of the agricultural sector farming out specialised agri-services throughout the country including to those in the most remote parts. The growth of BKB's approximately R3.5 billion annual turnover is dependent on accurate business intelligence data to provide them with reporting and analysis on current status and trends within their business.

No time for counting sheep

Although BKB extrapolated data from several different systems, including an ERP and a wool auctioning system, they did not have a holistic overview that would knit together their financial data across every division. At a snapshot, they needed to herd meaningful data across their business which they could use to identify sales.

They also wanted a business intelligence solution that could spot trends and opportunities for current customers as well as have the ability to identify new business opportunities. Instant debtor management, cross-sell opportunities, and efficiency enhancements for their operations were a further requirement.

Lastly, they needed an interactive facility that potential buyers and sellers could flock to for information on upcoming auctions.

Harvesting insights

Business intelligence germinates the seeds of opportunity. Businesses need immediate clarity on their position today to predict their future as accurately as the turn of the seasons. Cultivating intelligence drives fast and reliable business decisions by transforming data into actionable intelligence.

Planting the seeds

Dimension Data consolidated the data extracted from multiple IT sources into a single data warehouse residing on SQL server databases, with data to be updated daily. Analysis was applied to the data in a cube residing on top of the data warehouse in order to provide meaningful business information using Microsoft SQL Server Analysis Services (SSAS). Formulae, data relationships, key performance indicators and other measures were all built into the cubes analytical capabilities, and data was visually presented to the user on Microsoft Power BI dashboards.

Using a full suite of Microsoft technologies and tools (SQL server, SSAS, SSIS and Power BI), and a combination of managed and professional services, reporting dashboards were developed for instant financial reporting across BKB's divisions. In addition a cross-sale report and a wool dashboard were developed. 62% of South Africa's wool sales pass through the auction floors of BKB and the wool dashboard provides management with instantaneous financial statistics and trends in the wool business.

Lastly, the creation of an interactive Chatbot services the needs of their growing and existing client base. By leveraging the Azure cloud and chatbot framework services, the questions, answers, intents and interaction paths of the chatbot were mapped out with the ability to hand-off to an agent if certain questions cannot be answered or understood.

Reaping the rewards

BKB now has the opportunity to maximise their time, focusing on business development rather than spending time grazing data and preparing management reports that previously came out of three different dyed-in-the-wool back-end solutions. BKB can shepherd a holistic view of activities across all divisions making financial management and cross-sell that much more efficient. The accuracy of the

data ensures enhanced sales analysis to identify general buying and wool trading trends as well as gaps in the market.

Sales people, even if they're mobile, now have an instant view of client activities. The improvement within the accounts department has contributed to overall customer service satisfaction, rooting BKB as the industry leader.

"Using Power BI solutions, Dimension Data has successfully enabled BKB to monitor meaningful financial statistics and trends in our business at the touch of a button. Because of this solution, BKB has been able to greatly reduce the time required to make and execute important business decisions. The DD team rocks!" Dr Tony Simpson, Senior IT Manager, BKB GrainCo

Bidding for information

Customers now have access to a chatbot on BKB's website for information about BKB's auctions. The auction information is surfaced from the current BKB website in order for a single place of management with the goal to answer these and similar auction related questions:

- Where is the next auction?

- When is the next auction?

- What auctions are closest to me?

- When is the next [auction type]?

Also, an Active Directory Chatbot reduces the need for customers to call through to the central numbers to query contact information. Information is pulled from the current BKB Active Directory, answering these and similar questions:

- What is the contact number for [Name]?

- Who can I speak to in [Department]?

With BKB's business development intelligence and improved communications, it can now offer its clients greener pastures.