

A & R Whitcoulls: Retail Booksellers Write New Chapter with Q4bis

A&R Whitcoulls is the leading book-seller in Australasia with four divisions – the Whitcoulls Group, Angus & Robertson, the Calendar Club and the Travel Stores in Australia, NZ and Hong Kong. The Whitcoulls and A&R (Angus & Robertson) brands are well-established in their respective markets and have histories dating back over one hundred years. All of the above divisions are wholly-owned by Pacific Equity Partners.

The Whitcoulls Group comprises 62 stores, 40 of which are located in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Approximately 45% of all New Zealanders enter a Whitcoulls store at least once a month. The A&R Division is Australia's largest book retailer and has 103 directly owned stores and 61 franchised stores located in every state and territory. Both Whitcoulls and A&R offer an internet retailing platform.

The Whitcoulls Group has always been an innovative organization. In 2000 they implemented SAP for Retail to help them provide outstanding customer service. A&R followed their lead and rolled out SAP for Retail in 2004. For reporting, Whitcoulls and A&R used the Retail Information System (RIS) within SAP for Retail.

With the combined businesses using SAP for Retail, there was a vast store of key information that could be a valuable business resource for planning and analysis. But extracting that information was not easy. "We had all of this detailed data that had been captured via SAP for Retail," says Maureen Maloy, Manager of the Systems Support Group (SSG) for A&R Whitcoulls Group, "yet RIS was both too slow and too inflexible to provide us with the type of dynamic reporting that we needed for any sort of analysis or meaningful comparisons."

Added to this was the fact that A&R had built up considerable skills in multi-dimensional analysis and Business Intelligence reporting. "The team from A&R," continues Maloy, "had been accustomed to using an SQL-based database in their legacy system and had been able to create cubes to analyze the underlying data. Unfortunately, when we switched to SAP, they couldn't

replicate their reporting process using SAP RIS with the resources they had. It was frustrating for them as management had come to rely upon those reports."

Wanted: Analysis On Demand

To address these issues, the SSG was tasked to investigate short term options for a SAP-compatible Business Intelligence solution that could provide the reporting and analysis tools quickly. "Specifically," says Maloy, "we needed to create daily site / sales reports which associated



stock and on-order data in an environment of frequently changing master data criteria."

After a review of the different Business Intelligence solutions, A&R Whitcoulls selected Q4bis. "What really made Q4bis stand out from the others," says Maloy, "was their 'Proof of Concept' demonstration. They showed us how Q4bis would work with our own data. And because they were able to organise the Proof of Concept so quickly, we were comfortable that we would be able to implement Q4bis enterprise-wide in a timely manner."

"We especially liked the way that Q4bis depicted the data," continues Maloy. "The linked four quadrant views were impressive and contributed to our decision. We needed to build cubes around individual data types and dynami-

The Business Intelligence Tool for the Manager

"The use of Business Intelligence solutions will shift dramatically from dedicated analysts to all managers... spending 5% of their time using BI Software."

*Predicted by
The Gartner Group*

Who Uses Q4bis in A&R Whitcoulls Group

- ▶ Upper Level Management
- ▶ Planners and Analysts
- ▶ Group Managers

Benefits for A&R Whitcoulls Group

- ▶ Provides daily / weekly reports on sales stock at the individual store level
- ▶ Helps track results from promotions, allowing fine tuning during busy periods
- ▶ Improves data quality by identifying previously unnoticed data entry errors
- ▶ Allows analysts to fully utilise data that would otherwise be difficult to access

Key Reasons A&R Whitcoulls Group Selected Q4bis

- ▶ Provided ability to perform multidimensional analyses
- ▶ Intuitive 'four-quadrant' interface and ease-of-use
- ▶ Proof of Concept (POC) and Rapid Improvement Methodology (RIM)
- ▶ Complemented SAP for Retail environment

Associated Platform:

- ▶ SAP for Retail
- ▶ Retail Information System (RIS) within SAP for Retail
- ▶ Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- ▶ Oracle

A&R Whitcoulls Group's Q4bis Products:

- ▶ Q4bis DataServer
- ▶ Q4bis Analysis
- ▶ Q4bis Analysis Web
- ▶ Q4bis Report Publisher



cally link them together for multi-dimensional analyses. Q4bis allowed us to do exactly that quickly and easily.”

Rapid Implementation

Because the team from A&R Whitcoulls were already experienced in developing cubes and had an in-depth knowledge of the data structures within SAP, the actual implementation for the initial reports went extremely smoothly. “We have some very bright young analysts who embraced Q4bis from the outset,” says Maloy. “They knew exactly what they wanted to achieve in respect to reports and analyses and were able to build those applications quickly.”

A key component of the installation was the addition of Microsoft SQL Server into A&R Whitcoulls' environment. Because Q4bis DataServer is optimized to run in conjunction with SQL Server, Q4bis facilitated its delivery, installation and initial operations. “We were able to integrate the back-end Microsoft SQL Server platform into our overall SAP/Oracle environment quickly,” says Maloy. “The whole implementation process went according to plan. The entire process, including training and the building of our key databases and reports, was completed in just a few weeks.

Immediate Benefits

A&R Whitcoulls has already realized some tangible benefits from Q4bis. “In retail, things move very quickly and we need to be able to react quickly to market forces, including what our competitors are offering,” says Maloy. “One of the busiest times of the year is the Christmas holiday season. We were able to quickly build reports from our daily updated database to monitor how our special Christmas promotions were affecting sales on a daily basis at our individual stores. We were also able to monitor stock by different replenishment types to better understand the level of stock required in each category to meet customer demand without overstocking. While we could do most of this before Q4bis, it was labour-intensive and took resources and time. With Q4bis Analysis, we can now do these analyses on a daily basis with no further work once the views were created. Plus we can make ad hoc queries and adjust the parameters if we want as more questions arose. We just didn't have that type of flexibility before.”

While A&R Whitcoulls have not completed

“With the Q4bis solution set, we now have the ability to not only react to the market, but to be two steps ahead of the game by building flexible decision-making tools to assist with all levels of our business decision making.”

*Maureen Maloy,
Manager of the
Systems Support Group (SSG),
A&R Whitcoulls Group*

all of the reports and views required for the business, Q4bis has improved the information available for business decisions at A&R Whitcoulls. Maloy is confident that the ease-of-use, fast response and intuitive interfaces is making the Q4bis Analysis a valuable part of their operations. “Every week we have a management meeting to plan strategies and monitor performances. The reports and information generated by Q4bis have made the generation of the management KPIs (key performance indicators) for these meetings easier and faster to prepare.

The attractive site pricing was also a major bonus for A&R Whitcoulls. “We started out with a 15-seat license,” says Maloy, “but quickly upgraded to a full-site license as we saw how useful Q4bis Analysis would be across all the divisions. We now have the opportunity to roll out the product to as many users as we want without having to budget for additional licenses and maintenance again and again. It has provided us with more options for using the tool at all levels of the business.”

As A&R Whitcoulls continues to expand, they will more fully utilise Q4bis. “We've really just scratched the surface with Q4bis,” concludes Maloy. “We want to use Q4bis Analysis and Q4bis Analysis Web for the delivery of a like-for-like set of KPIs that can be used in the same way at many levels of the business. To be successful in the retail environment you have to be flexible and responsive to market changes.

Contact Q4bis:

USA

8 Corporate Park,
Suite 300
Irvine, CA 92606
Phone: +1 949 442 8326
Email: sales@q4bis.com
www.Q4bis.com

NEW ZEALAND

L.1, 300 Great South Road
Greenlane, Auckland
New Zealand
Phone: +64 (9) 529 3767
Email: sales@q4bis.com
www.Q4bis.com

AUSTRALIA

Level 1, 52-56 Atchison St
St Leonards, NSW
Phone: 1 800 042 208
Email: sales@q4bis.com
www.Q4bis.com

EUROPE

Tower 42, Old Broad Street
London EC2N 1HQ
United Kingdom
Phone: +49 700 7424 7888
Email: sales@q4bis-europe.com
www.Q4bis-Europe.com