

The power of performance management: Success in consumer packaged goods

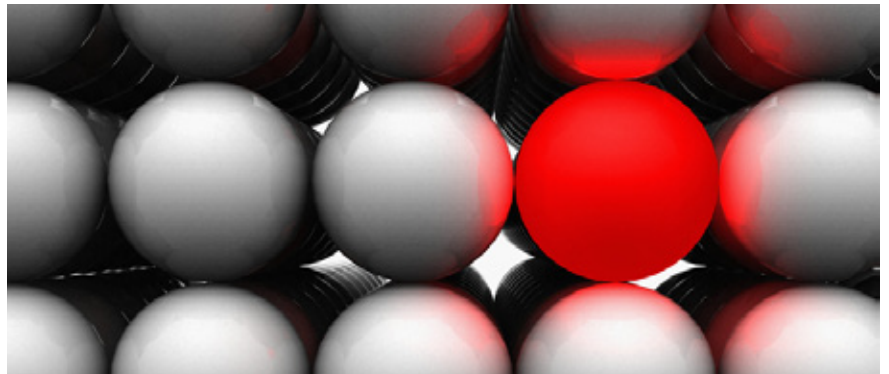
Consumer products companies have invested millions in ERP systems and supporting applications to help them manage operations. Yet they still struggle to understand inventory position, align supply and demand, identify sales and marketing performance and optimize their supply chains.

IBM Cognos solutions bring together technology, analytical applications, best practices and a broad network of partners to give customers an open, adaptive and complete performance solution.

With integrated IBM Cognos performance management software and services, leading consumer packaged goods (CPG) organizations are:

- Aligning supply and demand.
- Monitoring operations and controllable costs.
- Making informed decisions about capital spend.
- Coordinating planning and measurement.
- Modeling financial impact and risk.
- Improving operations, profitability and return on investment.

Hundreds of companies worldwide already use Cognos to optimize their business, including **Elie Tahari**.



“The IBM business intelligence system has significantly helped us gain visibility into our customers’ needs,” says Nihad Aytaman, director of business applications. “With efficiencies that have been brought into our day-to-day transactions, this system has saved Elie Tahari several millions of dollars annually and has paid for itself many times over.”

“IBM technology has helped us bring the kind of innovation in the high fashion industry that is helping us position ourselves better than the competition by creating brand loyalty for our products.”

Read on to learn more about how:

- **Creativity Inc.** uses IBM Cognos to make informed decisions, adjust supply chain fill rates through improved forecasting, improve customer service and reduce the time to close the books from 21 days to 12.

- With IBM Cognos BI, **Mark Anthony Group** accelerates delivery of business-critical information and key metrics, improves better decision-making and increases sales effectiveness.
- **Mueller** leverages IBM Cognos software to get critical information faster, analyze data in new ways, conduct thorough project sales analysis and gain faster access to key reports.
- **US Lumber** uses IBM Cognos software to view its key performance indicators on an hourly basis to gain insight into its eight cost centers, and make more informed decisions to improve business strategy.

Creativity Inc.



Creativity Inc. is a leading designer, marketer and distributor of basic crafting, beading, organization, paper crafting and scrapbooking products. The company sells proprietary designs and brands as well as commodity products, and its clients are primarily national craft chains, mass merchandisers and independent craft retailers.

Creativity incorporates several unique branded, wholesale distribution companies in the crafts sector, including Autumn Leaves, Blue Moon Beads, Crop In Style, DMD and Westrim Crafts. With nearly 400 employees, the company is one of the top five suppliers to the craft market.

Committed to providing superior customer service, quality and industry leadership, Creativity is focused on ensuring that its customers are always stocked with the right products at the right time. To support this effort, Creativity decided to deploy a new Solarsoft ERP system across its five divisions.

Quickly realizing that the analysis capabilities in its ERP system were limited, Creativity decided to deploy a BI solution so employees could gain

more insight into the organization and make better decisions. The company selected IBM Cognos 8 BI to provide employees with a real-time solution that could coordinate disparate data sources and locations to provide a single view of the truth.

Challenges faced

“We were generating reports from three separate ERP and Accounting packages,” explains Jim Mulholland, Vice President, Information Technology, Creativity Inc. “As the reports were being produced from operational systems, they were limited to standard formats. We needed to remove the veil on the data so we could arrange it the way we wanted, and report only those metrics that really matter.”

A key metric that Creativity needed to manage was its customer fill rate, with most customers requiring 95 to 100 percent fill.

“Meeting or exceeding our customer expectations in this area is critical to the company’s ongoing success,” states Mulholland. “Although we had some summary-level insight in this area, we wanted to provide our supply chain team with daily and weekly

details so that they could improve their management of this important customer metric.”

Strategy followed

Before deploying a BI solution, Creativity needed to put an information management structure in place. First, it consolidated its five divisions into the Solarsoft ERP. Next, Creativity standardized the data in the system and cleansed it into a cohesive warehouse platform. Then the company embarked on selecting a BI solution.

Creativity considered BI solutions from three vendors, including Cognos. The company’s key requirements were seamless integration with multiple data sources, minimal IT maintenance and ease of use. Creativity used a proof of concept to help evaluate the companies.

“We wanted to test the companies with real-life scenarios so we could easily judge them head-to-head,” says Mulholland. “Cognos was by far the best in delivering on the proof of concept. The Cognos team really showed us that they understood what we wanted to do, and made the product work with our data.”

Another important component of the decision-making process was the supporting products that the companies offered. Creativity needed a data integration tool.

“Cognos had the most comprehensive, end-to-end solution,” notes Mulholland. “And Cognos Data Manager was the best tool of the three by far. It was well developed, had a great interface and really solved the integration needs we had.”

“We selected Cognos because it was the clear winner on both functionality and the sales process,” comments Mulholland.

To kick off its implementation, Creativity loaded its new data warehouse with IBM Cognos Data Manager. Creativity then tapped the expertise of Cognos partner Acumetrics Business Intelligence (www.acumetricsbi.com) to help build a data warehouse, which was primarily fed information from the ERP on an IBM iSeries server. Additionally, Creativity enlisted training help from Acumetrics and Cognos partner Merador.

Creativity has also had the opportunity to use the IBM Cognos Support knowledge base and phone support.

“Most of the time, we were able to search the knowledge base and find what we needed quickly and easily,” says Mulholland. “On the few occasions we called in, we found the Cognos staff very pleasant and helpful.”

To help enable employees take full advantage of their BI solution, Creativity also established a Business Intelligence Competency Center (BICC), known internally as its Analytical Center of Excellence.

Considered part of the eight-person IT team, the BICC is tasked with maintaining the company's BI solution, which is deployed throughout the five divisions. The BICC is also responsible for the company's reporting, analysis and future BI requirements.

Pleased with the proven track record of its IBM Cognos solution, Creativity has standardized on the solution. Most recently, Creativity completed the migration to IBM Cognos 8 BI, using IBM Cognos Data Manager to help with the information conversion.

Creativity relied on Acumetrics to deploy the new software and build a portal with IBM Cognos 8 BI called CRAFTnet, an acronym for Creativity Reporting Analysis and Forecasting Tool.

“Acumetrics did a fantastic job,” says Mulholland. “We considered them an extension of our staff.”

Moving forward, Creativity has many projects it plans to finalize. For one, the company will begin developing dashboards using IBM Cognos 8 BI, and expects to deploy IBM Cognos 8 Planning, which is already being tested in-house. Creativity will also integrate its international vendor data into its data warehouse to provide a view into the entire supply chain cycle, including suppliers, warehouses and customers.

Benefits realized

With IBM Cognos 8 BI, Creativity has increased its efficiency by standardizing its reporting. Equally importantly, users are able to access a complete, consistent real-time view of the business easily and quickly through CRAFTnet.

As a result, information is more timely and consistent, providing employees with the foundation needed to make better and more informed decisions aligned with corporate objectives.

“By using Cognos 8 BI, we are beyond the point most companies hope to reach with data accuracy,” says Mulholland. “Employees can now

speak confidently about our data and easily match up reports and metrics, knowing that they are speaking the same language.”

IBM Cognos has given Creativity a competitive advantage in the \$10 billion crafts industry. It has enabled the company to meet key customer requirements such as fill rate, and the experience with Cognos has allowed them to speak intelligently with customers and vendors about market conditions.

“For us, the ROI gained from our Cognos business intelligence solution stems from improving the customer satisfaction and keeping our largest customers, such as Michaels Stores and Wal-Mart, happy,” stresses Mulholland. “We are one of the few craft suppliers that can service the large retailers in the way they want. Cognos helps make this level of service possible.”

Tapping the analysis capabilities of IBM Cognos 8 BI, Creativity has been able to improve its forecasting. Now employees can identify trends in sales and proactively adjust the supply chain. This gives them the agility to respond to opportunities in the market faster.

“That is an advantage for us in terms of profitability and margins,” notes Mulholland.

Another benefit: a significant reduction in the time it takes to close its books. In the past, the process took approximately

21 days and was based solely on information from the company’s ERP. With IBM Cognos 8 BI, this cycle has been shortened to 12 days.

“The data is now available to the finance team sooner,” comments Mulholland.

“Cognos 8 BI has been a tremendous asset in closing the books earlier.”

User feedback on IBM Cognos 8 BI has been overwhelmingly positive.

“There was certainly an information-starved group here,” emphasizes Mulholland. “Once we started feeding them the data, they just wanted more.”

Further, the management team has echoed similar types of praise. Using IBM Cognos 8 BI, Creativity now emails its management team key reports every day and at the end of the month. It also runs reports to send to its board of directors.

“With Cognos 8 BI, management is able to ensure that information is flowing properly and accurately, and really reflecting the key business metrics,” explains Mulholland. “The executive team and our board love the Cognos reports!”

Mulholland sums up his IBM Cognos experience: “I recommend Cognos all the time. The company has a well-thought-out strategy, and the solutions require minimal support from IT. It has been a very positive experience.”

“For us, the ROI gained from our Cognos business intelligence solution stems from improving customer satisfaction and keeping our largest customers, such as Michaels Stores and Wal-Mart, happy. We are one of the few craft suppliers that can service the large retailers in the way they want. Cognos helps make this level of service possible.”

*Jim Mulholland, Vice President,
Information Technology, Creativity Inc.*

Mark Anthony Group



MARK ANTHONY GROUP INC.
Fine Wine, Premium Beer & Specialty Beverages

Based in Vancouver, BC, the Mark Anthony Group (MAG) is a privately-held manufacturer and distributor of fine wines, premium beer and specialty beverages. The company's brands include Mike's Hard Lemonade, the number one brand in its category and largely responsible for the company's phenomenal growth over the last several years. MAG's primary markets are in North America.

With offices and distribution centers located across North America, MAG depends on a team of external partners to produce, distribute and sell its products. With so many partners and locations involved at different stages of the production life cycle, MAG initially deployed IBM Cognos ReportNet to ease reporting, and then chose to migrate to IBM Cognos 8 BI to enable its sales force to gain full, real-time access to the information in their customer database.

Challenges faced

The Canadian alcoholic beverage industry is highly regulated by various branches of provincial and federal

government bodies. This level of regulation allows distributors such as MAG to purchase customer and competitor information directly from the government that is otherwise unavailable at this level of detail and accuracy.

With a sizable number of SKUs and products, mixed with federal information on competitors, distributors and bottlers, MAG had a growing database to manage and maintain. The organization needed to allocate more of its staff's time to growing its business and increasing profitability through intuitive and integrated BI sales tools.

"Our biggest challenge was managing the immense amount of data we have and getting the right data over to our sales force," says Michael Der, BI Systems Manager, Mark Anthony Group. "We needed to distribute our information in a timely manner."

Strategy followed

MAG set out to find an integrated BI tool that would guarantee the data it had purchased from the government

was available off-site, and ensure that its sales and marketing teams were receiving up-to-date and accurate information in the field. In early 2004, the company was looking for a Web-based reporting environment to eliminate running reports from a local client.

"In the beginning, we just wanted to use the information that we were buying from the government. We invested a lot into that data and it's one of our most valuable assets," recalls Der. "But a lot of the time we weren't using it to the fullest capability. We wanted to provide our users with the tools to get data they could turn into useful information to close large deals."

As part of evaluating technologies in 2004, MAG had two key requirements in mind for its ideal BI solution – a strong analysis capability and scalability. MAG ultimately decided on IBM Cognos ReportNet for its maturity in the market and its ability to allow users to manipulate the information to their advantage.

“We also liked the way Cognos products are supported by Cognos Consulting, Training, and Support,” states Der. “We needed to make sure that there was a strong community of users out there so that if we needed support or access to a knowledge base, it would be available not just today, but in the future.”

After its success with IBM Cognos ReportNet, MAG decided to upgrade and standardize with IBM Cognos 8 BI. In 2007, the company began a migration to IBM Cognos 8 BI. After an eight-week process, the company seamlessly moved its reporting infrastructure into the new environment.

“One of the reasons that we chose to migrate to Cognos 8 BI, was to take advantage of Cognos 8 Go! Mobile,” states Der. “We eventually want all of our US field sales teams to access reports on their mobile devices through Cognos 8 Go! Mobile.

“We see the mobile solution as a simpler and more cost-effective alternative, opposed to having our field team carry laptops to access information in their customer sites.”

MAG decided to migrate simultaneously to IBM Cognos 8 BI, and from SQL 2000 to SQL 2005. During the migration, IBM Cognos Professional Services assisted MAG in restructuring its data model.

Users also participated in fast-track training, hosted by IBM Cognos Education in Vancouver, BC. In preparation for the upgrade, MAG had also purchased IBM Cognos DecisionStream and called in IBM Cognos Professional Services to assist in the report migration.

Currently, MAG has over 125 power users trained on the IBM Cognos solutions and runs nearly 100 reports daily, depending on the business unit – manufacturing, distribution and logistics of its Mike’s Hard Lemonade products, or the agency import wine business.

In addition to field sales support, MAG uses IBM Cognos 8 BI in inventory planning to determine the amount of glass or paper they need to buy for the packaging of their products. Now, MAG runs IBM Cognos 8 BI on Windows 2003 and SQL 2005 servers. The company’s ERP runs on MFG Pro ERP from a UNIX server.

“We rely heavily on Cognos 8 BI to get our information out to our sales team. We are able to push our reports out to them, rather than have them access the reports online. That’s been a big benefit for us and reduces the amount of time that they are spending in front of a computer. With this real-time access, our sales team has a leg up on the competition, and they can use this tool to increase the size of their accounts and even close major deals.”

*Michael Der, BI Systems Manager,
Mark Anthony Group*

"I don't think we can ever say we are finished with BI because we are always looking at ways to use it differently," says Der. "We tell our users, if you can dream up a way to look at the numbers differently, then we can use it. We want to encourage users to raise questions. If it is quantity-based, we are confident we can get that information."

Benefits realized

"We are pleased with the way Cognos is working for us," states Der. "Giving our users the ability to manipulate the information from our database has been an advantage for us.

"Especially with the amount of information that we produce, we are able to take advantage of that capability. Building analysis models from our own data wasn't enough, we

needed to manage the competitive information and identify gaps in our business as well."

With IBM Cognos 8 BI, MAG has been able to accelerate the delivery of business-critical information to its sales force, giving team members full insight into their customer accounts and the ability to identify which accounts are potential customer wins.

MAG is also using IBM Cognos 8 BI to measure critical success metrics like the amount of additional customers the company is gaining. This measurement used to take place on a monthly or quarterly basis, but can now be obtained weekly, so the company can view the amount of additional points of distribution they are gaining on a week-by-week basis.

"We've always had data, but it wasn't easy to derive this information from it," states Der.

Der sums up his IBM Cognos experience, "We rely heavily on Cognos 8 BI to get our information out to our sales team. We are able to push our reports out to them, rather than have them access the reports online.

"That's been a big benefit for us and reduces the amount of time that they're spending in front of a computer. With this real-time access, our sales team has a leg up on the competition, and they can use this tool to increase the size of their accounts and even close major deals."

Mueller



Mueller Inc. is the industry leader in Steel Building and Metal Roofing solutions throughout the south central United States. With over 500 employees, the company serves the central and southwest US markets from three manufacturing and distribution locations, and 22 retail outlets.

Mueller is a customer-focused company that values growth and the opportunities for advancement it generates. While maintaining a strong financial base, Mueller is committed to continuing its long-term growth rate of doubling in size every five years.

Challenges faced

Under the executive guidance of Mueller President Bryan Davenport, Chief Financial Officer Philip Arp, and Planning and Financial Analysis Manager Mark Lack had spent several months developing and refining a true Balanced Scorecard.

Together they had led the company in a process of identifying key performance indicators in the areas of finance,

customer service, internal processes and learning and growth. Their metrics dependencies were studied and process maps were created to reflect their leading and lagging characteristics.

After developing the metrics and gaining buy-in from key Mueller personnel, the next challenge they faced was extracting and disseminating the information in a timely yet cost-effective manner. A robust solution that could be implemented quickly was needed because the scorecard was critical to communicate Mueller's business strategy, and maintaining scorecard implementation momentum was crucial.

Strategy followed

In February 2004, Mueller chose to purchase the full suite of IBM Cognos Performance Applications, which included modules for sales, accounts receivable, inventory, general ledger, production, procurement and more.

They also opted to purchase IBM Cognos Metrics Manager and IBM Cognos Planning to further their scorecard and financial planning initiatives. Four months later, Mueller signed a consulting agreement with CD Group. CD Group's combined knowledge of IBM Cognos Performance Applications and J.D. Edwards EnterpriseOne were key to being selected.

"Cognos Performance Applications delivers a rapid return on investment and significant business value for our customers," says Larry Campbell, president, CD Group. "Cognos approaches performance applications in a way no other vendor does, providing a depth of pre-packaged technical and business content that is unprecedented."

The first phase of the project was the implementation of the sales and GL modules. The combination of these two modules enabled better than expected analysis and access to the core metrics needed in the Balanced Scorecard.

Currently, Mueller is fine-tuning the sales and GL modules and automating the balanced scorecard using IBM Cognos Metrics Manager. Mueller also plans to implement the production, inventory and manufacturing modules.

Benefits realized

Mueller has been very pleased with the speed and accuracy of their new platform. IBM Cognos Performance Applications have enabled them to get information in three minutes rather than three to four days.

The company now has faster access to standard reports and the ability to conduct thorough project sales analysis. With IBM Cognos software they now have the tools to target market strategy, evaluate their success, and leverage best practices to create a single version of the truth across the company.

Through the partnership of Cognos, CD Group and the client project team, Mueller is well on its way to becoming a state-of-the-art implementation of performance management tools and processes.

“By delivering Cognos Performance Applications, we are extending and complementing the J.D. Edwards solutions to help our mutual customers increase sales productivity, competitiveness, and customer satisfaction,” says Bill DeSpain, executive director, CD Group.

“J.D. Edwards ERP clients need better analysis and reporting tools, and we’re pleased to have an approach that brings improvement so quickly and easily.”

“With Cognos we were able to analyze data in ways we could never imagine.”

Mark Lack, Planning and Financial Analysis Manager, Mueller Inc.

US Lumber



US Lumber Group is a \$325 million specialty wholesale building-materials distributor with headquarters in Atlanta, GA. The company provides personalized customer service to more than 6,000 customers and currently distributes products from eight cost centers, providing service throughout 14 southeastern and mid-Atlantic states. US Lumber also distributes domestic and imported forest products from Europe, Canada and South America.

Known for its customer service and high-quality products, US Lumber's sales force was rapidly growing. The company needed a sophisticated BI solution to help calculate and analyze a year's activities, including all their financial forecasting.

The company was already using IBM Cognos ReportNet and chose to migrate to IBM Cognos 8 BI in February. More than 130 users across the organization access IBM Cognos 8 BI, running 500 reports with thousands of views. US Lumber is now able to view

its key performance indicators on an hourly basis to judge success in its eight cost centers and make more informed decisions related to business strategy.

Challenges faced

Initially, US Lumber had a small vendor providing day-to-day metrics. The Web-based application was limited to daily performance indicators and the overall data scheme was small in scope and difficult to extract.

"As the company grew and got more sophisticated, our ability to forecast a year's activities became a lot more complicated with the tools we had available," recalls Felipe Herrera, senior financial analyst at US Lumber Group.

"At the same time, we were planning a major ERP upgrade and were told that the cost for financial forecasting with our current systems would be high. Given this situation, we decided to look outside of ERP for calculating our financial forecasts at a reasonable cost."

Strategy followed

Given the limitations of its current application, US Lumber set out to find a solution that provided in-depth reporting capabilities and could also scale to meet the needs of its quickly growing sales force.

"We were held captive because we had to supply all of our data requirements to a third-party vendor," comments Herrera.

The senior executives at US Lumber were first introduced to the Cognos BI solution in 2005 at the annual Cognos user conference, Cognos Forum, and were impressed by its sophisticated Web reporting capabilities, its flexibility, and its ability to scale. US Lumber evaluated both OutlookSoft and Cognos 8 BI, but ultimately chose Cognos based on its corporate stability and better all-around solution.

US Lumber decided that IBM Cognos 8 BI would enable its sales force to understand and monitor current performance while planning future

business strategies. The entire implementation process for Cognos 8 BI took only one weekend. Two of the Cognos trusted partners, Accumetrics and Loadstar, helped with the migration.

“It was just a very easy installation. We had only a handful of reports out of thousands that had issues. All the data was perfect,” states Herrera.

Once the implementation process was complete, US Lumber began running approximately 500 reports, which created thousands of views. IBM Cognos 8 BI views enable data to be seen and understood relationally, which helps each cost center make more informed business decisions.

US Lumber also runs a high-level, corporate overview report for the executives to view and analyze. This report details information on the company as a whole, providing a snapshot view that compares sales and operating costs among the eight branches.

“The daily metrics make it possible for everyone to see exactly where they are and what they’re doing in comparison

with the other branches. All I have to do is just tell our sales force to use Cognos 8 BI to find any information they need. It is very powerful,” comments Herrera.

The management, finance, procurement, marketing and sales teams at US Lumber use IBM Cognos 8 BI to view data in a timely fashion and make better decisions for their business operations. Currently, 130 employees use IBM Cognos 8 BI, with the majority of users accessing reports daily. In the future, US Lumber will deploy IBM Cognos 8 Planning to help with product sales planning.

US Lumber also relied on Cognos Support to assist with questions about the deployment of IBM Cognos 8 BI. “When we first migrated, Cognos Support was right there beside us, helping us along with any inquiries we had on the technology. Our overall experience with Cognos Support for the past two years has been very good,” states Herrera.

Benefits realized

“Cognos 8 BI has opened the eyes of the corporation to how much data we actually have,” states Herrera. “We weren’t aware of how data-starved we

were when we only had 12 reports to review and analyze. Cognos 8 BI has really opened up our company data, giving us intuitive insight into the ways it is relevant and connected.”

With IBM Cognos 8 BI, US Lumber can now look at all types of data and analyze it on the fly, which helps make daily decisions for management easier and more accurate. Additionally, because US Lumber is able to view its key performance indicators – cost per pound and average margin per day per branch – on an hourly basis, its management team is equipped to understand how their business can be affected by one development instead of another.

“Previously, we would have an application created for us by an outside company,” says Herrera. “This became expensive, as an update to a third-party procurement application would have cost us \$100,000. With Cognos 8 BI, we can create our own applications that are ten times more sophisticated and flexible than any of the applications created by third-party vendors.”

In addition to significant cost savings, IBM Cognos 8 BI provides Herrera with tremendous flexibility in creating new

reports by combining data. Branch managers can now create reports that measure planning and reporting at a granular level – account-by-account and expense-by-expense. The company uses this insight into these metrics to assist in judging success and developing more informed business strategies.

IBM Cognos 8 BI has also enabled US Lumber to create a profitability application in which the company assigns costs to multiple items to various types of customers with different sizes of orders. The orders can vary from sending one piece of lumber to a customer to sending them a whole truckload of 45,000 pounds to another. Now, every order has different levels of profitability.

Most importantly, by having all the data in-house, US Lumber has complete control of the information and issues with reports or scorecards. The company is also able to immediately catch an order that was missed or billed incorrectly, and make the necessary adjustment the same day. Now, the sales team is better able to diagnose issues and solve them quickly, increasing customer satisfaction.

Herrera sums up his Cognos experience, “I’ve been programming for many years. I know how a computer thinks and works. Right out of the box, Cognos 8 BI was easy to pick up and start using. Our employees have also found it to be very user-friendly. Cognos has been a real joy to work with and has made a huge difference in our organization.”

“Previously, we would have an application created for us by an outside company. This became expensive, as an update to a third-party procurement application would have cost us \$100,000. With Cognos 8 BI, we can create our own applications that are ten times more sophisticated and flexible than any of the applications created by third-party vendors.”

*Felipe Herrera,
Senior Financial Analyst,
US Lumber Group*

About IBM Cognos BI and Performance Management

IBM Cognos business intelligence (BI) and performance management solutions deliver world-leading enterprise planning, consolidation and BI software, support and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. IBM Cognos solutions bring together technology, analytical applications, best practices, and a broad network of partners to give customers an open, adaptive and complete performance solution. Over 23,000 customers in more than 135 countries around the world choose IBM Cognos solutions.

For further information or to reach a representative: www.ibm.com/cognos

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An IBM Cognos representative will respond to your enquiry within two business days.



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