PowerOLAP® Our customers speak for us.

Volex, North America

Providing significant time savings—and more power and flexibility for standard and ad-hoc reports—PowerOLAP is being rolled out worldwide by this cable assemblies giant. "The speed of reporting is *key*."

A case study with comments by Corey Baker, Financial Reporting Manger, Volex, North America.

"Our biggest PowerOLAP advantages are more timely reports and a much more manageable Excel environment. The returns have been excellent, especially gauged against the product's cost," says Corey Baker, Financial Reporting Manager at Volex. "Among the biggest benefits are the ease of reporting and the ability to pull data into Excel quickly for multiple sites." Indeed, Volex has expanded PowerOLAP from a US solution to a global one: "Right now North America and Europe are using PowerOLAP for Financial Reporting & Budgeting. Asia has 15 sites doing Financial Reporting." Other PowerOLAP projects are in the works.

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Baker explains some of Volex's requirements and why PowerOLAP is being deployed worldwide: "We do financial reporting as well as forecasting and budgeting—each quarter we do a full forecast. All this was well beyond the capabilities of Excel. We had a spreadsheet for each of our 10 sites, and Actuals had to be manually typed in each one. Forecasting data also had to be manually loaded. This took 2 people working 4 days to finish. The sheets were all linked and consolidation was hard to maintain. Clicking a button [with PowerOLAP] is definitely a better option!" Baker exclaims.

"Now all of our metrics reporting is done in PowerOLAP instead of through 35-40 linked spreadsheets, which was an absolute nightmare to maintain. We also use PowerOLAP for vendor performance tracking, which was similarly done in Excel before—one sheet per site, which linked into a consolidated sheet. We were constantly dealing with incorrect links and broken links. Adding a new year or a new vendor was really time-consuming."

For a global manufacturer like Volex—one of the world's leading independent suppliers of electrical, electronic and optical fibre cable assemblies—a real change was in order to find the right reporting system. When Baker's unit upgraded to a new accounting tool and ERP system on an AS/400 system, they lost their reporting capability: "It eliminated our capability to get any data. With the new system, we had to download all the data and run Access-based reports using Excel as a front end—but we could never get it to work consistently, so it wasn't really an available tool. It took 45 minutes to do one P&L statement, and sometimes it didn't work at all." Baker explains.

From 8 Days to a "Click of the Button"

"Our Budgeting system was also Excel-based, with multiple spreadsheets linked together to provide the necessary levels of consolidation—this has been replaced by PowerOLAP as well," Baker adds. "A major pain point was the frustration of senior management because the budget wasn't rolling up correctly. The time to open all the spreadsheets to find which links were not working was excessive."

> **"We use PowerOLAP worldwide now. It saves us big time, making all our processes much faster."**

"We use PowerOLAP worldwide now. It saves us time, making all our processes much faster. Our reporting is much faster. It would take 20 minutes to print out just a financial statement and then distribute hard copies—we couldn't get that data into Excel—and now, almost instantly, we have the data in Excel. All managers have refreshable spreadsheets."

As Baker notes, the PowerOLAP-based reporting system is as capable with 'ad hoc' reports as with the firms' standard reporting needs: "There is a very big advantage in using PowerOLAP for ad hoc reporting. It is incredibly fast: you just take a few moments to get a 'slice' of the data you want, and you can create an impressive report—actually many reports—through the use of pick boxes."

Familiar, Everyday Excel, but 'Supercharged"

What Volex got with PowerOLAP was not only speed, but also the benefits of using the tool they use every day—Excel—for all their sophisticated reporting needs. Now, using Excel as the front end to an optimized OLAP system, the situation is vastly different: "Immediately you can see that if you know Excel, with PowerOLAP you can do amazing things. It is a piece of cake to do the same report for multiple locations. This was the tool I was looking for!"

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"Rather than spending time duplicating data, I can do one flexible report. It is not boring, not frustrating, and not menial, like it used to be—whereas previously entering Actuals into our forecast report could take 3 or 4 days for a person to finish. It's a whole new, super-charged capability for Excel—I am constantly updated, so I can therefore look forward to going home at a reasonable hour."

In the Final Analysis, PowerOLAP Delivers More

Owing to PowerOLAP's "multi-cube" architecture, Baker does not have to wait for all locations to report before starting some of his analysis: "We used to have to wait for data to be sent from other locations and loaded into our system, making coordination very difficult—we couldn't see what the end-of-month looked like until we received that transmission. Now, for these reports we can have several cube-models going—one for each location—and another cube for consolidations. It's real-time, daily, and not waiting for data. The different locations don't have to be fully completed with their month-end data for us to start analysis."

> **"I am constantly updated, so I can look forward to going home at a reasonable hour."**

Baker adds, in reference to inventory reports, "People in many different locations can do inventory reporting from cubes that produce inventory summaries each day—it used to be that the summaries were done once a week and were four days old!" These reports are business-critical at Volex, since they keep track of inventory like computer cables (for OEMS like Nortel and Telco) and power cords for computers and drills. This means added flexibility and analysis at any point in time for any location: "We used to get only one full rolled-up report once a month for our 45 to 50 warehouses. Now managers get a daily report on inventory for any of the warehouses updated *as of this morning* to give them insight into raw materials, finished goods and sub assemblies."

> **"Previously we would get a report once a month…now managers get a daily report updated *as of this morning*."**

Having expanded PowerOLAP from a US solution to a global one, Volex plans for more growth soon: "In the future, we hope to tie the systems together internationally. We are based out of the UK and we would like to ideally roll up to the head office eventually and synchronize on one PowerOLAP server. Sales Reporting and a European Consolidation are our first projects. We are working with the different departments on how we will structure the reporting."

For more information about Volex, see www.volex.com.

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