

Toyota Australia, the country's leading vehicle maker and car exporter, is a global vehicle manufacturing center headquartered in Port Melbourne, with sales and marketing coordinated from Sydney and branches in every mainland Australian state. To support Toyota's famous kaizen business philosophy, Toyota Australia must deliver precise information when and where it is needed throughout the continent-wide operation, whether sourced from the company's SAP®-based business information system or from several other legacy systems. The solution: xReports – the new SAP-centric cross-application reporting tool from Revelation Software Concepts Pty Ltd.

An Evolving Data Landscape



As companies grow, the shape and location of their key business information constantly changes. Data is merged or split, new information sources

evolve and the underlying business logic evolves. In this shifting landscape, IT departments are under constant pressure to provide intelligent ways to interpret the information flowing constantly through the system. However, creating meaningful reports to tie together information from disparate data sources quickly and at short notice is no easy task. For an organization as extensive as Toyota Australia, with multiple sources and data stored in a variety of formats in locations across the continent, conventional reporting tools failed to meet the needs of the organization.

It was precisely this challenge Revelation Software Concepts had in mind when it created xReports, its SAP® system-based cross-application reporting software package.



"In one of our departments, our application vendor struggled for two years to deliver reports from an SQLServer OLAP structure without success. We completed the task in two days with xReports."

"We found that Revelation Software Concepts developed their products to solve customer business problems."

Peter Cassell,
Business Intelligence Manager,
Toyota Australia

Needed: A Fast, User-Friendly Tool

Confronted with this challenge, Toyota Australia's IT staff took a good look around.

The multi-dimensional OLAP tool they found, though powerful, was not a good fit because it was not fast or nimble enough. In addition, the OLAP learning curve was much too steep.

"We needed a better approach," explains Peter Cassell, Business Intelligence Manager at Toyota Australia. "We were looking for a reporting tool that was friendly, easy to use, and would integrate completely with our core systems, which are based on SAP."

xReports initially attracted Cassell's attention because it can talk to SAP-based systems directly, using SQL. IT people qualified in SQL are easy to find, so Toyota Australia would not have to find people proficient in SAP's native ABAP® language just to access data quickly. Using SQL, they could create consolidated, integrated reports based on data from multiple sources, including non-SAP sources.

A Mixed Environment

Says Cassell: "If IT cannot supply necessary information quickly, people still need the information, so they find workarounds and put up with unbudgeted costs. xReports is solving that problem for us."

Toyota Australia used Oracle, MS Access and SQL Server in various capacities, including as "scratch pad" databases for quite specific, limited purposes. By giving users rapid access to all the data they need via an SAP-based system add-on, xReports eliminates the need for such scratch pads, simplifying the data landscape and removing a possible source of errors.

During a relatively brief 'Proof of Concept' testing period, xReports proved simple to develop in, very fast, and capable of tying multiple datasets together with good performance.

"Many organizations find that little rogue databases and personal spreadsheet based systems proliferate. I've experienced up to 100 of these in a single company, simply because IT could not create the reports people needed fast enough. We wanted to avoid that."

The Deployment

The installation went smoothly, with xReports requiring only a basic server, says Cassell. xReports began to provide database access immediately, making a variety of data sources available, including the core SAP-based information system.

The program's design as a true web based application allows it to split processing between the underlying database, the web application and the browser client as appropriate for best performance. "From an environmental management perspective it's very easy to deploy because you're just giving an internet address," notes Cassell. "This improves data control and security as well as ease of deployment and faster data access."

The Impact

Cassell says xReports had an immediate, pronounced impact in Human Resources, which ran one training management database in SQL Server and another in an SAP environment. As Cassell noted, "Being able to quickly identify deficiencies in employee skill sets is important in an organization and being able to look very quickly at your resources in a large organization is just as important – in recruiting, in training allocations and in achieving corporate goals."

To merge the dual data sets without xReports, HR previously had to download data from SQL Server, export SAP data and feed both into Excel manually. Then HR could generate reports but with no assurance that moving the data around had not introduced errors.

"With xReports, you're looking at the raw, untouched original data," notes Cassell. "The ROI is the time it takes to manipulate data manually into Excel – maybe a couple of days, versus a couple of minutes with xReports. It's a savings you see every time you pull a new report."

The Technology Story

To the technically proficient, xReports at first seems to rely on an OLAP engine, perhaps as a variant such as MOLAP,

ROLAP or HOLAP. The truth is, xReports is none of those... and all of those. It can read a normal OLTP database, but can also read any of the standard cubes or data warehouses using native vendor-specific SQL with the OLAP SQL enhancements. In other words, if a cube already exists, xReports can take advantage of it. Or it can tap into real-time data with SQL queries. And it ties all the data together.

The Bottom Line

Toyota Australia has settled on xReports, says Cassell. "A number of tools claim to integrate with SAP, but in reality they can only talk to parts of SAP"

He adds: "Just as importantly, if you're talking about quality and aim to build a long-term relationship, there is a certain amount of trust. It's a real two-way relationship. That's why Toyota does so well; we build those lasting relationships, and I see the same attitude at Revelation Software Concepts."

Toyota Australia will soon roll out xReports throughout its continent-wide Australian operation.



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"We connected xReports to our network and it was available instantaneously, to everybody."

Peter Cassell,
Business Intelligence Manager,
Toyota Australia

