

SOLUTION OVERVIEW
Client University of South Africa
Industry Education
Solution Type Business Intelligence
Technologies SharePoint 2013, SQL 2012, Reporting Services, Integration Services, PowerView, PowerPivot, Analysis Services Tabular
Completion Date 2013-07-30

1. The Client

Unisa is the largest open distance learning institution in Africa and the longest standing dedicated distance education university in the world. Unisa enrolls nearly one-third of all South African students.

Founded in 1873 as the University of the Cape of Good Hope, the institution became the first public university in the world to teach exclusively by means of distance education in 1946. Throughout the years, Unisa was perhaps the only university in South Africa to have provided all people with access to education, irrespective of race, colour or creed. This vibrant past is mirrored in our rich history, more particularly our massive and impressive database of alumni, some of whom are to be found in the most senior levels of society across the world.

2. The Problem

Unisa's Finance Directorate: Budgeting and Cost Management had an existing Business Intelligence implementation, which sources data from various university systems to provide information for cost and budgeting purposes. The existing solution however was overly complex and reliant on a difficult to maintain design limited by the use of previous generation BI technologies.

3. The Solution

iSolve proposed and overhaul of the existing solution, which aimed to simplify the design with a specific focus on maintainability as well as the introduction of the latest generation BI tools from Microsoft, to enable end users to access information with greater ease.

The solution focused on providing a simplified ETL (data extraction, transformation and loading) layer, upgrading the data storage to SQL 2012 technology to provide improvements in speed and storage,

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and upgrading the presentation layer to SharePoint 2013, which allowed for the introduction of self-service BI features such as PowerView and PowerPivot.

4. The Technology

SQL 2012 was implemented to provide the data platform for the BI Solution.

Data extraction, transformation and loading (ETL) was developed using SQL Server Integration Services.

SQL 2012 Analysis Services Tabular models provided the platform for data analytics.

The existing SharePoint 2010 environment was upgraded to **SharePoint 2013**, with the inclusion of all the BI features, such as Reporting Services, Performance Point Services, PowerView and PowerPivot.

5. The Benefits

The main benefit of the project was the ease of maintainability provided through the redesign of the data extraction architecture made possible through the implementation of the latest generation of the Microsoft BI toolset.

The Finance Directorate at UNISA now has a stable and maintainable Business Intelligence platform, which allows them to focus on creating meaningful data analysis and reporting elements, rather than using time to gather data from the various departmental source systems.

Further benefits provided where the ability for end users to create self-service BI dashboards using PowerView and PowerPivot technologies, which they are publishing in SharePoint 2013 to allow for collaboration around business processes and decision making.

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