



AEL
Africa Express Line Ltd.

Overview

Africa Express Line Ltd (AEL) - a British Shipping company based in Kent - operates a fleet of 8 very modern, specialist and reliable refrigerated vessels between West Africa and Europe on weekly liner services, handling temperature sensitive and perishable fresh fruit cargoes. These multi-purpose ships are fully equipped to enable a wide range of ports on the West African coast to be regularly serviced on fixed days of the week and are supported by a professional and experienced logistics team to cover a wide range of maritime transportation needs.

The close monitoring and management of all ship activities is a prime requisite of AEL, as is the need to generate accurate and up-to-the minute reports for internal consumption, to ensure accountability and best practice adherence, for clients and for harbour and port authorities.

Situation

Needing to manage its fleet, crews and contracts, AEL contracted with an independent software house for the development of and implementation of a centralised data management and reporting system. Unfortunately, the solution fell far short of AEL's expectations: the generation of business critical reports was a complex and time-consuming process, crucial information was spread across the organisation, errors were introduced which compromised the integrity of the reports and it proved difficult to integrate the solution efficiently with other applications.

After considerable investments in time and money, we were not substantially better off than we had been before starting the project," explained Alexandra Grist, AEL's IT Project Manager. "We needed a partner that had a solid Business Intelligence practice, had substantial experience in distribution and which could undertake the necessary development and implementation to deliver an efficient and easy to use Business Intelligence Solution."

Solution

AEL approached a number of BI organisations before selecting Panacea as its partner of choice. "Panacea ticked all of the boxes," continued Alexandra Grist. "They had a proven team of BI and integration developers, had substantial experience from working with major players in the distribution industry and brought NAV expertise to the table as one of our objectives was to integrate our new solution with our existing NAV applications."

Working closely with AEL's small, tightly knit IT team, Panacea rewrote the original, bespoke SQL-based solution and added a Business Intelligence platform using BusinessObjects Edge - a powerful business intelligence solution designed for midsize companies that want to improve business processes, discover new opportunities and gain a competitive advantage. The creation of a centralised data warehouse further enhanced the solution by providing a single repository for all information.

Drawing from its extensive BI experience and expertise, and using industry best-practice, Panacea's integration development specialists designed, developed and implemented a powerful BI solution to meet and exceed AEL's objectives. In addition to providing dashboards and other visual cues to allow AEL to identify anomalies and issues, and take appropriate proactive action, Panacea also fronted the solution with BusinessObjects Web Intelligence to deliver self-service access to data and intuitive information analysis. Integration with Live Office improved AEL's data and information distribution and capabilities - particularly for AEL's finance department.

Outcome

With a new, powerful and fully functioning BI and reporting solution now in place, AEL management can rapidly access business critical information and generate a wide range of reports customised to the individual requirements of each individual, helping AEL turn business insights into effective decisions. With a few mouse clicks, users can create a query from scratch, format the retrieved information, and easily analyse it to understand underlying trends and root causes. And if they don't require the full power of query capabilities, AEL management can simply explore information in existing reports - formatting and interacting with data to meet specific needs.

"This has been a very useful partnership with an organisation that understood the direction of AEL," concluded Alexandra Grist. "In addition to designing, developing and implementing a solution that considerably enhanced our management decision making processes, Panacea was extremely proactive throughout the project, making suggestions and recommendations that added increased capabilities to our system and ensured that our BI solution could be expanded as our requirements and objectives evolve."

- AEL management now able to monitor and report on all aspects of individual voyages
- Comprehensive solution has improved decision making processes and allows for proactive steps to be taken to rectify potentially costly issues before they can impact the business
- Centralised information repository accelerates reporting processes and ensures reports based on all available and up-to-the minute data
- Panacea's in-depth familiarity with Business Intelligence, distribution and NAV, combined with proven BI development expertise gave AEL a single partner with all required expertise in-house
- Integration with Live Office enhances data distribution and manipulation
- Web Intelligence gives AEL management powerful, online and offline ad hoc query and reporting capabilities

