



Case Study: IBM Cognos Consulting and Implementation

January, 2011

Table of Contents

Overview	3
The Problem	3
The Solution	4
Conclusion	5

Overview

Our client is a large government body rolling out a common accounting platform across the entire region for which this government department was responsible.

The Oracle E-Business Suite was selected as the adopted common accounting platform along with the IBM Cognos 8 BI Performance Application suite as the main reporting toolset.

The rollout encompassed a large multi-department, multi-site and 2000+ user solution. We were engaged initially by the client to provide subject matter expertise in the IBM Cognos 8 BI suite and to assist with planning and executing the final phase of Performance Testing prior to project 'Go Live'.

EXIST resources subsequently took on the role of IBM Cognos lead for performance testing.

The key deliverables were:

- Fabrication of a Production-mimicking IBM Cognos test environment;
- Performance test design;
- Performance test execution; and
- Analysis of IBM Cognos 8 BI as deployed at the client, including performance tuning recommendations.

The Problem

Our client had previously engaged with another 3rd-party vendor to deliver the IBM Cognos component of the overall solution. End User feedback about the IBM Cognos solution already in use in the Production environment had raised serious concerns that the solution performance was not as expected. Since the 3rd-party vendor had provided re-assurance the IBM Cognos solution was performing adequately and had been delivered to requirements, it became vital that the results from the Performance Testing Phase gave conclusive evidence, accurately determining if the solution was fit for purpose.

This involved benchmarking of the high-profile at-risk reports and of the end-to-end overnight ETL refresh. The ETL refresh was required to operate within an allocated window of 8 hours during overnight Production downtime, taking into consideration the fact that the volume of data produced by the Oracle E-Business Suite was expected to grow significantly in future years.

As it was not possible to test performance in the Production environment without affecting the performance of Existing BI capabilities in that environment, it was necessary to create the performance test environment which was effectively identical to the Production setup. As well as emulating the physical architecture of the Production environment, test data was loaded into the test environment based on the maximum potential capacity of the Oracle E-Business Suite.

The role of EXIST resources was to ensure the IBM Cognos environment has been configured correctly, mirroring the load-balancing, multi-tiered setup extant in Production, ensuring the full ETL was in place and functioning correctly so as to load the reporting data warehouse.

In addition to the general dissatisfaction and lack of general uptake by the user community for the IBM Cognos BI solution as configured by the 3rd-party vendor, relations between our client and the 3rd party vendor had become strained. There were continual debates about whether the solution had been delivered in accordance with requirements.

Our client sought out EXIST as a trusted and independent IBM Cognos partner, to serve not only as a delivery partner during performance testing but as an expert IBM Cognos advisor in subsequent work packages.

The Solution

EXIST resources immediately began to add value onsite by removing the dependency on the 3rd-party vendor.

Even with a 3rd party vendor reluctant to share information or assist EXIST resources or our client, EXIST resources delivered the fully configured the IBM Cognos test environment ahead of schedule.

During the performance testing design period it was observed that the automated tools used to test the IBM Cognos Reports under simulated large user concurrency scenarios were causing stability problems in the test environment. EXIST resources' expert knowledge of the IBM Cognos architecture and application server configuration meant the problems were pinpointed quickly and remedial steps taken to quickly resolve the issues.

To ensure the performance tests designed were a true reflection of user behaviour, EXIST resources initiated a series of workshops with the end user to profile the typical report usage and use cases in play in the live environment. Whilst it only represented a portion of the full user base, the information was fed into the design of the report test scripts to ensure real world behaviours was being emulated were possible and realistic data sets retrieved. These workshops included:

- Training up on the performance test tool and rolled the sleeves up for some hands on testing.
- Detailed analysis on identified performance issues, including proposed resolutions.
- Assisting the client responds to the 3rd party vendor questions regarding the outcomes of the performance testing, being the go-to person on-site.

Conclusion

EXIST is now the client's sole delivery partner for the organizations IBM Cognos services requirements.

Our relationship with the client has grown significantly as we were able to:

- Give the client peace of mind that that they were being advised by an independent and committed partner, trusted in their approach and knowledgeable in their field.
- Advise the client on the use of the audit package to accurately profile IBM Cognos user and assisted the user complete an impact assessment to determine the effects of implementing corrections into Production.
- Establish a strong relationship based on mutual respect and trust.