CENTRAL PIEDMONT
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Customer Story

Largest Community College in North Carolina Creates a Self-Service Reporting Environment with Informer

Conversation with Ben Diel, CIS System Administrator, Central Piedmont Community College

Pain points

- Queries primarily had to be written by IT
- Redundant and inefficient reporting processes
- Missing level of security needed to extend access to majority of users

Results

- Majority of college is self-sufficient to create reports
- Productivity increases along with cost and time savings
- Security configured down to the data element

Central Piedmont Community College Customer Story

Challenge

Central Piedmont Community College is the largest community college in North Carolina, offering close to 300 degree and certification programs, customized corporate training, market-focused continuing education and special interest classes.

CPCC had been using Query Builder to run queries against data within their Datatel® database. The IT department created the majority of these reports and then delivered the reports or the saved query files to end users. Queries were stored in multiple locations on shared network drives. "There were a few power users capable of writing their own queries, but this duty was primarily an IT function," explains Ben Diel, CIS System Administrator at Central Piedmont Community College.

The reporting process at CPCC created a number of challenges including redundancy and inefficiency. With the vast number of reports they had to manage and the inconsistent frequency in which they are run, it was difficult for IT to track and maintain which reports had already been created and where they were located. "A large amount of time was wasted in locating and recreating previous reports," says Diel.

In addition, a significant amount of time was spent modifying existing reports to add a single field or change the sequence of fields for usability which slowed down decision processes. Some reports were recreated simply because the same report was asked for with slightly different requirements. "We needed a way to centrally manage reports and provide access to data from a more user friendly interface to allow our end users a level of self-service", says Diel. Their previous reporting solution did not support the level of security necessary to extend reporting access to the majority of users. The college needed a solution that would pinpoint who had access to what data for audit and security purposes and allow users to run or modify their own reports without having to overload the IT department with requests.

Solution

Ben Diel and the team at CPCC built a business case and viewed demos of reporting solutions on the market. They selected Informer. "Many colleges had made the switch to Informer before us and were in love with the product", says Diel. "The implementation of Informer was pretty straightforward and installation was easy." With an easy-to-use, drag and drop web-based interface, Informer created an intuitive, self-service reporting environment where CPCC users can customize reports and perform real-time, ad-hoc analysis of school data based on their own specific needs and requirements. "Informer provided the most functionality and usability compared to the other solutions we reviewed", says Diel.

CPCC rolled out Informer by department, converting existing reports and creating the necessary file mappings and security configuration. Each department indicated which reports they needed converted and IT handled the initial process of setting them up. Once the initial reports were converted, the IT department trained users on how to create and modify Informer reports. And with initial file mappings and security now established for each department, future reports were a breeze to create.

Results

"I would find it difficult to put a dollar amount on what we have saved using Informer", says Diel. The IT team at CPCC still receives requests for report creation by certain areas, but the majority of the college is now fully self-sufficient to create, modify and deliver the reports they need to manage operational processes.

"With over 300 Informer users, this has been a tremendous cost, time and workload savings for our department and I'm also certain that there has been a huge increase in productivity by other departments since they are no longer dependent on IT for their reports", says Diel. "The point and click interface of Informer has allowed us to give report access to just about anybody. The users love the interface and the ease with which they can create their own reports with just a little knowledge of the back end data and how it's laid out. This saves them a great deal of time".

Prior to implementing Informer, the school was hesitant to provide reporting access to users because they were unable to set up comprehensive security parameters for data access. With their previous solution they were only able to limit access to power users and those that had extensive knowledge of the underlying data. Informer enabled CPCC to configure security to control all functions and data sources down to the data element. "Now that we are able to limit the scope of a user's access, we are much more inclined to give the user the freedom to create and run reports", says Diel.

Informer is now the primary reporting solution at the college. "We have reports from all areas of our organization", says Diel. The reports range from simply informational reports to automated reports being utilized in a variety of other college functions. "We use it for creating exports for our bank files, bookstore and our Operational Data Store".

"We have recommended Informer to any college having difficulty with their reporting solution", says Diel. "The cost savings and reduction in IT workload make the purchase well worth it."

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