CASE STUDY

Cipal's Cloud Application Embeds Pentaho Business Intelligence

By Embedding Pentaho, Cipal Better Helps Belgian Municipalities Monitor and Measure Performance

About

Cipal is an information and communications technology (ICT) provider based in Geel, Belgium. For more than 30 years, Cipal has been serving the public sector and public institutions in the Flanders region with innovative and reliable ICT and e-Gov solutions and services on a quality-driven and cost covering basis. Cipal has a unique structure in Flanders because it is the only public ICT company in the region and is owned and controlled by local and provincial governments. Although Cipal has 203 government stakeholders, it is completely self-supporting. Cipal aims to offer all its IT services in the Cloud including Software-as-a-Service, Desktop-as-a-Service, Infrastructure-as-a-Service and now also data Warehouse-as-a-Service.

QUICK FACTS

- Industry: Public Sector
- Headquarters: Geel, Belgium
- Website: www.cipal.be
- Products/Services: Pentaho BI (data integration, reporting, dashboards and analysis) Pentaho OEM

Cipal created Athena BI to make fast, transparent enterprise-class key performance indicator (KPI) benchmarking a reality in local government. The software provides a 360-degree view of all social welfare organizations from one central data warehouse, enabling managers to actively steer local plans and budgets, rather than reacting. Cipal's vision is to enhance information management quality within large and small local governments.

Before Athena BI, the individual social welfare associations managed their human resources, financial and civilian (CRM) data locally using a wide range of stand-alone systems – from manual files to Excel spreadsheets. Many of these systems were very cumbersome to learn and use, expensive to maintain, and only gave employees enough information to react to, rather than anticipate problems. The fact that municipal data was not connected also meant that there was no view of the big picture or comparisons between social welfare organizations.

Challenges

For the first time ever, Belgium is enacting new government legislation in 2014 that will require municipalities to publicly declare policy objectives and

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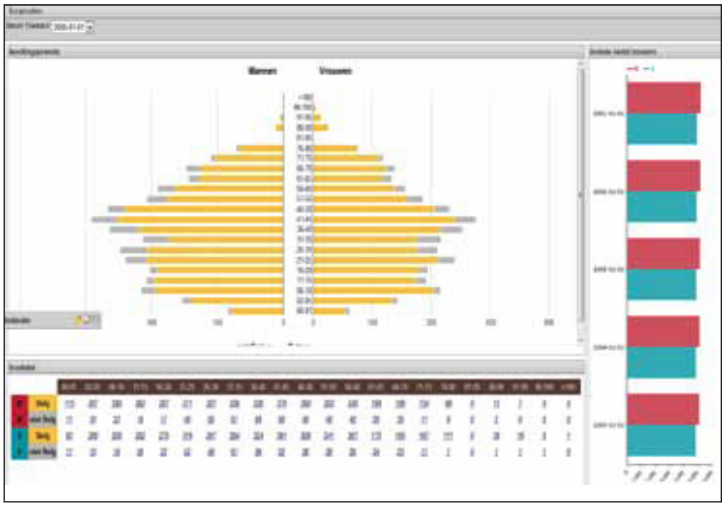
> Pentaho BI turned out to be the ideal platform for our Cloud-based Athena BI OEM application, which we have rolled out to four social welfare associations in Flanders.
>
> – SVEN MEERMANS
> *Development Manager, Business Intelligence, Cipal*

their action plans to meet these through KPIs. Social welfare organizations handle a broad range of public services for people who are unemployed, elderly, disabled, seeking asylum and otherwise needing support. Municipalities allocate funds for these services from local tax revenues at their discretion and are accountable to their residents.

The new 2014 legislation for planning and reporting transparency represents a major operational and cultural change for the local municipalities, so Cipal was enlisted to support them in developing new systems and processes. Due to the social welfare organization's need to publish their performance against KPIs, Cipal proposed to develop and pilot a BI application similar in functionality to what is normally available in private enterprise, to four social welfare organizations – Genk, Hasselt, Mechelen and Turnhout. Cipal sought a BI application it could tailor and re-brand "Athena," named after the Greek goddess of wisdom.



Pentaho's Embedded Analytics Solution skinned to match the look and feel of cipal's cloud Application

Solutions

Following an exhaustive review of traditional and open source BI vendors, Cipal chose Pentaho BI Enterprise Edition to embed in their Athena BI product. Cipal hosts Pentaho BI on a cluster of virtual machines (Redhat Linux and zLinux). The solution is set up to be multi-tenant so only one version of the application is needed, and Pentaho's metadata is used extensively to make sure row-level security is correctly applied across the different users at each location.

Cipal is filling up the data warehouse step-by-step with data from different data sources. In addition to human resources (HR) and financial data, Cipal plans to introduce support for analyzing a wide range of data sets including CRM (relating to the service requests by local residents), civilian affairs, culture, nursing homes and spatial planning. They are deploying the full range of PentahoBI capabilities including data integration, reporting, dashboards and analysis. Cipal's long term plans include adding Pentaho BI's data mining capability for profiling customers who use municipal services in order to plan more efficiently and improve the experience.

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CIPAL CHOSE PENTAHO BI FOR THREE REASONS:

- Wide range of fully integrated modules including ETL and visualization tools, which meant that Cipal could use Pentaho BI to deliver a complete, OEM-branded solution that was tailored to precise stakeholder-defined specifications.
- Highly competitive total cost of ownership (TCO) that is a fraction of traditional, proprietary alternatives. Belgium, like many other countries, is making budget cuts. Keeping IT costs to a minimum is vital to ensure that the Flemish taxpayers, who ultimately fund the system, get the best value for their money. With its fixed annual subscription, Cipal's licensing costs stay manageable; adding an extra customer to Athena BI doesn't incur incremental fees.
- Flexible infrastructure enabling Athena's shared services to be hosted and deployed in the Cloud. Cipal's public sector clients enjoy all of Cloud's flexibility and cost-benefits including the ability to access dashboards from any web browser, scale the number of users up and down as needed and outsource application maintenance, hosting and data security.

Results

- Rapid time-to-value – The Athena implementation was completed and rolled out within budget to four social welfare associations in just four months, which included holding workshops with end users to review functionality and extensive testing with back office staff and operations managers.
- Power to the user – IHR managers are now empowered to create, customize and analyze their own reports on their own time without reliance on IT. For example, they can create human resources staff reports showing employee demographics, like the number of full vs. part-time employees and attendance data. They can also see how many people apply for specific jobs and through which channels (e.g., website, agencies) in order to measure which are the most effective.
- A step towards change – After the success of the pilot project with human resources data, Athena BI will now be rolled out to more social welfare associations, municipalities, and provinces adding new functionality to monitor financial and other data. This is a major step forward in the right direction to provide long-term significant value to the Belgium government.
- Knowledge transfer – Cipal is collaborating with Pentaho partner, BiSmart, to offer end user training on Athena BI.

Summary

In 2010 Belgium announced public sector budget cuts along with new legislation coming in 2014 requiring municipalities, provinces and social welfare organizations to publicly declare policy objectives, action plans and performance measures. This meant that these organizations needed an affordable, enterprise-class BI application to measure their progress and publish their results and plans to local taxpayers. Pentaho's local OEM partner Cipal, selected Pentaho BI Enterprise Edition to develop a white label application called Athena, delivered in the Cloud. Cipal chose Pentaho BI because it was affordable and the only open source vendor to provide all the functionality it needed, including data integration, analytics and reporting. In just four months, Cipal implemented and rolled out Athena to four social welfare organizations – Genk, Hasselt, Mechelen and Turnhout – involving key stakeholders at every stage. Analysis and reporting on Human Resource data is currently live, soon to be followed by Financial and other data and offered to all the local governments in the Flanders region.

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