

Case study

North East Water



About North East Water

North East Water provides water and sewerage services to 39 towns, villages and cities in North East Victoria. More than 113,000 people in an area approximately 20,000 square kilometres benefit from its water and wastewater treatment, reuse and distribution. North East Water also assists new developers, plumbing services and trade waste services.

It focuses on the treatment and delivery of high-quality water to its community through a disciplined and streamlined approach. It utilises robust financial technology to ensure budgets are aligned with business objectives.

The challenge

North East Water's outdoor operators and team leaders are located in nine depots dispersed across nine areas, so receiving accurate and timely financial reports about each individual town under its jurisdiction was a challenge. It was looking to easily centralise budget reporting to ensure tighter management of its financials and make it easy for staff in the field and at its offices to better execute budget reporting and analysis.

The outcome

North East Water operates and maintains more than 1600 kilometres of water mains and pipes, and manages more than 1000 kilometres of sewer mains. Specifically, it manages the infrastructure to supply water and treat sewage for 45,000 homes, businesses and factories across 39 towns, including water treatment plants, pumping stations, tanks, towers, service basins, reservoirs, pipes, sewerage pumping stations, wastewater treatment plants and recycled water reuse sites.

Team leaders are responsible for this vast infrastructure across a number of towns and are expected to efficiently manage their area's water and wastewater budgets.

"Before we implemented TechnologyOne's Financials and BI solutions, it was difficult to analyse and dissect financial information and see what was happening across individual towns, or to drill down across depots or facilities," says Nicholas Moore, Finance Manager for North East Water.

The solution

In 2007, North East Water successfully implemented the TechnologyOne Financials solution which delivered integration of financial information with an on-time, on-budget implementation. In early 2010, it implemented the TechnologyOne Business Intelligence (BI) solution, which provided the ability to interpret accounting and financial information more effectively across the entire organisation.

"Finance had to run a number of reports which were then put into a central directory. The whole process took longer, there was too much information, and data was sometimes outdated once it hit the central system. All of this made it difficult to track or analyse our budgets versus actuals."

North East Water wanted a solution to enable easy and quick delivery of accurate budget and expenditure figures on the fly. "With TechnologyOne BI solution, everyone has immediate access to a central database that updates their individual figures in 'real-time,'" said Mr Moore.

"Everyone has access to a live system including commitments, making it easier to highlight and dissect variances, so there is a lot of flexibility to make changes daily."

BI's key benefit is that it's tailored to suit everyone's area of responsibility. A dashboard with a graphical and visual interface allows team leaders and department staff to input information pertinent to their area only. Alternatively, Executive Managers and Senior Managers are able to view the whole organisation's performance via dashboards, which enables them to identify major variances quickly and easily.

Mr Moore added: "BI has the flexibility to tailor reporting for different audiences. For example, we may want analysis of spend and budgets at a high level, or we can analyse data at 'facility type' or 'activity level!'"



Products

TechnologyOne Financials – delivers enterprise wide control and integration of financial information essential to strategic decision making and improving the bottom line. Through its unique financial architecture, rich functionality, powerful online enquiries, and versatile reporting ability, the solution provides the ability to interpret accounting and financial information more efficiently than ever before.

TechnologyOne Business Intelligence – comes data-aware for TechnologyOne software to deliver immediate business benefits. From a user-friendly dashboard, monitor, visualise and take action across software system boundaries with an integrated, real-time, organisation-wide view of key strategic and operational metrics.

Budgeting and Forecasting – TechnologyOne Budgeting and Forecasting provides smart budgeting processes based on accurate, real time information. It is designed to manage organisation-wide budgeting activities by providing seamless communication of strategy with integrated financial reporting, business modelling, scorecards, and dashboards. It is an end-to-end planning, budgeting, and forecasting solution.

The outcome continued

For the executive management team, the BI solution allows them to run their own reports, without requiring any assistance from the finance department. Eamonn Tobin, Executive Manager Information Services, said: "I can very quickly aggregate across a whole number of accounts, pull them all together, and then display it as a report in the format I want."

He added: "BI is the icing on the cake when it comes to easily pulling budgets together, or drilling down across the four groups I manage. What's more, the dashboard provides a simple and fast way to obtain a summary view of data at an executive level."

Implementation

Implementation of TechnologyOne's BI solution took between two and three months and Mr Tobin was impressed by the short time frame. "We invested in BI because we wanted this type of solution for a long time. I have to say, we were impressed by the fast implementation process, especially considering I've seen BI implementations within other organisations by other vendors whose price tag was exorbitantly high and the implementation process extremely long."

"TechnologyOne BI solution was very reasonably priced and they didn't just hand the solution over to us expecting us to work it out for ourselves – they worked closely with us to make sure we could use it in the real world. The whole process was seamless, from initial consulting on our business requirements, to implementation, training and uptake."

Mr Tobin believes the step-by-step approach applying Business Intelligence to Financials before rolling it out to other departments, is the major reason the solution was fast to deploy, is easy to use and provides quick results.

"We're looking to further explore how BI can be applied throughout the business as it has potential to help us further improve business performance and make more strategic decisions."

Major Benefits

For North East Water, one of the biggest benefits is management's financial visibility across the entire organisation, especially as things change.

Mr Tobin explains: "We can now run Financials and receive reports 24/7 if we want to, and this is delivered in real-time. So if something is different, or there is an issue, our dashboard will flag it very visually. I think this is a major benefit because it gives us the ability to immediately resolve issues as they occur while ensuring firm financial control."

Additionally, team leaders and managers can now produce their own reports and drill down into figures relevant to their own budgets, without relying on the finance department. "They have ownership over their budgets and they have a clear view of how they're tracking," notes Mr Moore.

He added: "If the solution wasn't easy to use, I'm not sure it would be possible to get people to use it. We've had feedback that BI is very intuitive, whoever the user. This is a great result because our future objective

is to implement BI in other areas, like our external water billing solutions."

Future Benefits

North East Water also utilises TechnologyOne's Budgeting and Forecasting solution and, from the next budgetary cycle commencing December 2010, anticipates great benefits from also applying BI.

"When we go through our next financial cycle, I can see BI will certainly help," said Mr Tobin. "It will allow us to look back at our expenditures compared to the previous period, which will help us establish a stronger and more accurate budget for the next period. This was quite a cumbersome task in the past and I expect BI will make things much, much easier for the next cycle."

As a government-run business, North East Water's budgets require approval from various government departments.

"As we become more familiar with BI, I can see the approval process will not be as onerous," said Mr Tobin. "Because each of the 39 towns we deal with has an individual budget, the intricacies that go into budget preparation are quite large. This is where we can see great value from the Budgeting and Forecasting solution together with BI; it will help us minimise the complexity and time frame when delivering budgets for approval."

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Eamonn Tobin
Executive Manager
Information Services
North East Water

One vision. One vendor. One experience.

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TechnologyOne (ASX: TNE) is a leading enterprise software solutions provider. For 25 years we have been providing deeply integrated software solutions for business, government, financial services, health and community, education and the utilities sectors. Many thousands of people each day use our world class solutions which we develop, implement and support. Our organisation wide solution suite, integration solutions and custom designed solutions provide world class services which are based on leading edge technology and are backed up by a substantial R&D program providing our customers with a long term, secure and valuable partnership. TechnologyOne employs more than 800 people and has offices in each State and Territory of Australia, as well as New Zealand, Asia, the South Pacific and the United Kingdom.

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