



SOUTH STAFFS WATER REDUCES REPORTS FROM 100 TO 30 WITH QLIKVIEW

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– Sean Smith, Head of Business Systems, South Staffs Water



South Staffs Water is a water utility serving 1.29 million people and 38,000 businesses in the West Midlands of the United Kingdom. Its domestic customers pay the third lowest water bills in England and Wales—partly attributable to the utility being ranked fifth in the industry for efficiency and low operating costs. With annual turnover of £84.5 million, South Staffs Water is the third largest water only company in England and Wales and serves an area of 1,500 square kilometres.

Achieving high levels of service efficiency and customer-focused management with low charges for consumers involves making innovative use of technology throughout the organisation. The utility supplies 300 million litres of water a day across a network of pipes that total 6,000 kilometres in length and supply around 500,000 homes. Technology is a principal driver for efficiency and responsiveness at South Staffs Water in multiple ways including works management, customer service, operations and maintenance, finance, and data reporting to name but a few.

Technology is also important to the utility in meeting external challenges from the Office of Water Services (Ofwat), its regulator. South Staffs Water comes under constant scrutiny from Ofwat, the official regulator for water and sewerage companies.

Reducing information overload for improved reporting

Reducing information overload was also a major priority to make the business more agile and in control of up to date data about everything from ensuring water quality to customer requests for service. The requirement was for a Business Intelligence (BI) tool that could satisfy the needs of executives, middle management, and those with responsibility for particular underground or over ground assets. Flexibility and a fast time to market were important to South Staffs Water. Mobility was also a consideration for the future with users increasingly needing to access BI data on the move or at remote locations.

Sean Smith, Head of Business Systems, South Staffs Water, says: “On asset and work management, we had in excess of 100 static reports which presented a huge challenge in developing a single version of the truth from our raw data. This is housed in multiple data sources in Oracle, Excel spreadsheet software, and Microsoft Access.

SOLUTION OVERVIEW

South Staffs Water

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Industry

Utilities

Function

Executive, Operations, Finance

Geography

United Kingdom

Challenges

- Provide near real time reports on KPIs via dashboard portal
- Help meet data demands from industry regulator
- Offer self-service reports to up to 150 users

Solution

South Staffs Water deployed QlikView to help reduce information overload and improve reporting on KPIs.

Benefits

- Reduced information overload from 150 to 20 to 30 reports
- Combined data from multiple sources into a single version of the truth
- Pinpointed inefficiencies for instant remediation
- Offered the potential for future use by mobile staff

Data Source Systems

Application: DW/BI

Database: Oracle Financials, IBM Maximo, Excel, Microsoft Access



We needed to reduce these reports from 100 to between 20 and 30 to avoid complete information overload. Our vision was for one consolidated reporting front end that gave our users a single version of the truth.”

QlikView offers instant access to detailed reports from existing data sources

South Staffs Water researched options for improved BI reporting including SAP Business Objects/Crystal Reports but opted instead for QlikView with development to be done in house. Smith says: “Traditional BI software lacked the fast time to market that we as a utility required and was much less cost effective than QlikView. As a Business Discovery platform, QlikView delivered a true and interactive enterprise reporting tool with complete flexibility and a rapid return on investment from reduced information overload.”

In a submission to the regulator Ofwat, South Staffs Water said: “The [QlikView] software package allows the user to undertake analyses of the data via structured lists and multiple graphic options. The flexibility of the system is paramount in allowing asset owners to manipulate the data captured in the works management system both for operational and capital maintenance planning processes.”

Extending QlikView to asset management and mobile systems

Smith and his business analyst team have found new and innovative ways of improving efficiency with QlikView for operational and planning purposes. It will also help supply information to the regulator quickly and easily.

Currently, the company is implementing IBM Maximo Asset Management software, which unifies comprehensive asset life cycle and maintenance data on a single platform, plus software for remote access to asset and work management processes. Smith envisages that the users—senior executives, middle management, and project managers—will in future access QlikView using mobile devices such as iPads although he is not at that stage yet. In due course the company expects to have around 150 QlikView users.

QlikView offers single version of the truth with consolidated reports

QlikView is seen as the key to unlocking the value of the utility’s business

data by producing instant self-service ad hoc reports. They combine the information from IBM Maximo with other systems including Oracle Financials. This no longer requires the intervention of the IT department because key users can generate reports themselves on a self-service basis.

Smith says: “When the IBM Maximo system goes live QlikView Business Discovery will help project and operational managers alike to analyse resource utilization and see the total project or Work Order cost. This will help pinpoint any inefficiencies that may arise in near real time so corrective action can take place sooner to increase the uptime of our assets. This was impossible under the old system using static reports where, by the time information was produced it was often out of date.”

Rapid time to value around user adoption and rapid systems reporting

Smith considers that the principal benefits are around time to value through rapid reporting and user adoption. He says: “Business users who wouldn’t typically analyse data are now empowered to query the asset database. They are quickly able to see which assets were maintained at what time and when the next job card needs to be created. South Staffs is also using QlikView to analyse its SIM performance for Customer Contact. Developments here not only enable the business to collate regulatory information on demand, it also allows us to identify trends in Customer Satisfaction sooner, thus providing the business with greater opportunity to address any risks to Customer Service before they become an issue.

QlikView has proved its value to South Staffs Water through ease of development. There was no need to hire a systems integrator to deploy the solution. A wide range of uses has been found for QlikView with more in the pipeline. For example, within IBM Maximo extensive information exists about the inventory and stock held at various sites throughout the South Staffs Water area of operations. QlikView will help to extract that information immediately for rapid action to reduce overstocking or remedy any gaps that may exist. “Previously, to get an accurate view of the stock value across the organization could take up to three days,” says Smith, “but now it is available in seconds.”