

EDEKA – the Customer is King

Retail group gains better access to MIS data with MIK-OLAP

With 28,000 employees, some 1,700 grocery stores and sales of approximately 5 billion Euros, the EDEKA Minden-Hannover Holding GmbH ranks as the single largest regional retail trading company inside the EDEKA Group. Back in the mid 1990s, this company began working with MIK-INFO, a management information system that supplied members of management and financial controlling with a significant amount of valuable information on a daily basis.



Although EDEKA was quite satisfied with their existing MIS, they decided to migrate from MIK-OLAP to MIK-ONE in early 2002. »In order to further expand our user circle, we started searching for a tool that end users could use more easily. Besides, we were looking to substantially increase the number of standard reports, but were keen not to lose overall clarity,« says Heike Rohlfiing-Bolte, head of the controlling department in Minden.

MIK-OLAP is a database system or data warehouse that allows for information to be stored in so-called data cubes. Whereas data is firmly linked together in the tabular structure of a conventional table-oriented database and every new query generally requires creation of a new table or new relations, with OLAP queries the link between data is not formed until the query is actually made.

Here, it is possible to find out how successful a specific activity was using only a few mouse clicks, regardless of whether the activity took place at the corporate level or only at a single EDEKA location. Data can be cumulated for an entire region based on the size of the store or be sorted by date. With each query, the software provides the exact data that the user has selected, delivering the desired results in only a few seconds.

OLAP is not always OLAP

Nevertheless, the solution offered by MIK differs from other OLAP databases in two key ways. The data cubes do not require any special IT know how and the business related focus of the database offers support in defining data cubes through useful filters. »The problem with many data warehouses is that they are simply too complex,« explains Bernd Siemon, responsible for the MIK office in Hanover that provided support to EDEKA in migrating. »This means these types of projects must usually be completed by IT specialists who understand the technology, but usually have little grasp of the importance of business related content. This often results in queries that are of no real use to the users,« Siemon adds.

In the case of MIK-OLAP, Rohlfiing-Bolte's experience was completely the opposite. Today, EDEKA uses four data cubes that she herself built in only a few days. From the many conversations she had with colleagues she learned that these cubes offer precisely the information that is needed on a day to day basis. »Previously, our people had to spend a lot of time on the phone asking for the information they were missing in order to make decisions. Today, they receive exactly the data they require extremely quickly. Consequently, they are able to spend their time on more important matters than just collecting data,« Rohlfiing-Bolte says.

»Just like every other company, EDEKA was faced with the challenge of offering authorized users easy access to the data they require, while making certain none of this data can be misused,« Rohlfiing-Bolte explains.

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With the help of software from MIK, individual EDEKA stores can analyze their data on a daily basis.

To achieve this, the two frontends, MIK-ONE und MIK-XLREPORT, were integrated into the intranet. »Once the user has logged into the system, he has access to all of the data that he is authorized to see. He then has two different options. Using only a few mouse clicks, he can assemble a new query or obtain access to predefined reports. Here, each user also has the option of putting together their own reports e.g. reports they require on a frequent basis,« Rohlfig-Bolte continues.

Such queries can be used to put together an overview or a chart. However, in most cases, tables that can be presented in Microsoft Excel via MIK-XLREPORT are used. The user can also easily modify or revise these charts, if necessary.

The extremely easy implementation already suggests how simple it is to use the system. Other than a brief introduction to the numerous functions, no additional training was required. »All we really do is provide some in-depth information over the intranet. Otherwise, the system is so intuitive that users can actually begin building queries of their own in only a few minutes,« Rohlfig-Bolte explained.

As easy as it is to use, the system's infrastructure is extremely complex. »Today, IT systems never originate on a green field. Here, EDEKA Minden-Hannover is no exception. We already had various systems in use that supplied data to the data warehouse,« Rohlfig-Bolte explains. The company uses the SAP modules FI (Finance) and CO (Controlling), Paisy as a personnel management system and a merchandise planning and control system, but the cash and carry pick up stores operate under MIOS and are integrated into SAP R/3-Retail. Numerous other systems are also embedded in this architecture.

Two analysis systems reside on top of these productive applications. MIK-OLAP draws its data from the retail merchandise management system, the personnel management system and the two SAP modules FI and CO. Then, SAP Business Warehouse delivers the information contained in the retail applications.

Updated on a Daily Basis

»Today, the stores deliver data from the previous day to the merchandise management system during the evening, where it is processed and relayed to MIK-OLAP. We then recalculate the cubes during the course of the evening and deliver up-to-date data by the time people begin working in the morning. This means users have all day to perform analysis and make decisions,« Rohlfig-Bolte explains.

»Currently, approximately 300 employees are able to access reports, not only at the main office here in Minden, but also in many of the stores. In retail, in particular, gaining a more extensive knowledge base is becoming more and more important,« she concludes.

Further Information

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