QlikView

Cape Town International Convention Centre gains scientific edge over competitors

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Shaheen Jutzen, Business Intelligence Manager, CTICC

Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), which already hosts most of SA's international conferences, has turned the art of booking meetings into a scientific masterpiece and a formidable competitive edge, thanks to business intelligence (BI) from QlikView.

According to spokesmen, the software has already yielded "untold" benefits and now looks set to boost its booking-to-sale conversion rate, among many on-going enhancements.

Competitors will be concerned. "Conferences have massive regional and national economic spin-off," says Shaheen Jutzen, Business Intelligence Manager, CTICC. "Everybody strives to be ahead of the game, but CTICC is streets ahead in our decision-making and service, thanks to the immediate views we enjoy of the state of our business, from any angle, across the enterprise."

Solution Overview

Cape Town International Convention Centre
Leading convention centre in Africa

Industry
Events, conventions, exhibitions, meetings

Function
Operations and finance

Geography
Cape Town, South Africa

Challenges
- A need for segmented financial reporting, down to event level.
- Understanding the cost and benefit of hosting individual events, involving multiple variables.
- Many modules in many places with only pre-defined Excel reports available, making it laborious to merge data.

Solution
- QlikView developed and implemented a revenue-cost model, overlaid on top of the operations systems.
- Successfully tied together all operational reports in one format that could be easily analysed and interpreted.

Benefits
- Detailed understanding of the value of different event types.
- Areas of weakness identified in their reporting.
- Managing sales performance individually.
- Improved service levels.
- Now forms the basis of almost all operational decision-making.

Data Source Systems
- Multiple operational systems.

Business need

CTICC invited QlikView to develop a debtors and creditors' data model early in 2009, after identifying a need for segmented financial reporting, down to event level, says Melissa Cupido, management accountant at CTICC.

But QlikView's potential beyond this soon became clear. Jutzen, then newly appointed in his current role, says understanding the cost and benefit of hosting individual events was the real prize. Its calculation remains the focus of constant refinement, as it involves multiple variables including venues, pricing and other issues like supply chain management and even energy consumption.

Before QlikView the business had less insight into this complex issue, Jutzen explains. "We have an operations system that contains all the information required for analytics, but it has many modules giving only pre-defined Excel reports, so you had to look in many places and laboriously marry the information. Every two weeks, we'd spend many hours drawing and analysing reports, correcting mistakes and repeating it for each new query. It can drive you insane.

Tying it all together

To simplify the process CTICC asked QlikView SA to tie all its operational reports together in one format that could be easily interpreted. Within three months, QlikView had developed a revenue-cost model, overlaid on top of the operations system, which did all the above and also helped CTICC identify areas of weakness in its reporting.

QlikView implemented the system, with Cupido and CTICC's IT department receiving training –Cupido on using the data models, and IT on developing new models and tweaking existing ones. Thus began what is shaping up to be a long-term joint history of QlikView within the CTICC.

Powerful analytics at a glance

Suddenly, the organisation could do enormously powerful things, says Jutzen. "At a glance we could see all booking-related information – total revenue, what percentage a type of booking contributes to that over time, who made the booking – all within seconds!"

Since then, QlikView's influence on CTICC's operation has only evolved and grown, Jutzen adds.

- The organisation now understands the value of its different event types – which include conferences (national and international), special events, 'other' events, banquets, film shoots and so forth – much better. "We market differently to each segment, and each contributes differently to the revenue mix," says Jutzen.
- In addition, it can now manage sales performance individually.
- Most recently, the company has begun tracking its conversion rates, after doing a baseline study for the first time with QlikView's help. This further refines booking decisions on the basis of a probability weighting. This weighting is also used to budget for a percentage of future booking revenue

On-going benefits

Cupido says with QlikView as the basis of almost all its operational decision-making, CTICC's service has also improved, as it has been able to set key performance indicators for staff. "We are very dependent on real-time information, and we cannot expect our clients to wait longer than absolutely necessary for their tax invoices," she notes.

In the near future it will start slicing and dicing occupancy statistics. "It's always been a tedious process working with Excel to know exactly how busy we were," says Jutzen. "It also gets complicated pretty quickly if a venue is subdivided, or the contract specifies something else out of the ordinary."

"QlikView built all these permutations into our business view pretty easily. Now we can look at our occupancy per venue or venue category, contract type, venue percentage utilisation and whatever else we deem necessary. With a direct link to revenue, occupancy is much more meaningful in decision-making and pricing terms."

Theoretically, all this was possible before, if CTICC spent weeks on such complex tasks. The point is that it can now be done in a matter of clicks.

Many other productivity and model-specific gains were possible with QlikView, resulting in massive savings. Implementing and using it (at a total cost of R3 million versus the R12 million cost of the previous analytic environment) resulted in immediate savings of R9 million.

Project notes

A total of six data models are currently in place since QlikView's incumbency began two years ago, says Jutzen. "On the whole, projects ran smoothly, but initially it was difficult to get management buy-in," he concedes.

"Luckily we found a sponsor in the COO, who bought into it immediately, and this has facilitated further rollouts," he says. "In fact, I think we've created something of a dependency among the executives."

Operations staff quickly took on an impressive degree of responsibility for keeping the operations system current, says Cupido. "I think the deep visibility of all aspects of the business has brought this about. People take pride in keeping their area in the clear for our regular internal presentations. There's much more urgency in our staff's interaction with the system."

Jutzen has only good words for QlikView SA's involvement. "Our consultant really seemed to understand the business, which is extraordinary, given the diversity of our products and the peculiar requirements of our clients."

He adds that the software's payback period was impressive. QlikView showed a return on investment within weeks of acquiring the revenue data model.

Future improvements

As a consequence of that and QlikView's benefits, the CTICC will seek to introduce QlikView in every aspect of the business with a bearing on revenue and profit, he says.

Jutzen says the sky is the limit for further improvements of the system, including age-related information, supplier prices, labour efficiency, energy efficiency and more. "Each time we think of some new enhancement, we discuss it with QlikView, and within a short while it usually becomes a reality."

Control your product and earnings

It is this constant refinement that has turned the CTICC's business into a scientific system that leads the way for others in the business. More to the point, with the ease and immediacy of highly sophisticated business views, it puts the meetings host way ahead of the crowd.

"I believe we have something no other competitor has, and that is a consummate ability to control our product and earnings," says Jutzen. "What we're doing is revolutionary in the industry, and it is thanks to QlikView."

QlikView
South Africa