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## Overview

### Customer challenge

Drinks manufacturer A.G.Barr wanted to find a way to analyse sales and profitability across an increasingly complex portfolio of brands – but with numerous data sources and reporting systems, consolidating the data and breaking it down from a brand perspective was a complex and time-consuming task.

### Solution

Barrachd, an IBM Business Partner, helped A.G.Barr create a central data repository based on IBM InfoSphere™ Balanced Warehouse and integrate it with the company's three key sales systems. IBM Cognos® 8 Business Intelligence was chosen as the company's standard reporting solution, providing highly flexible data analysis capabilities.

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# A.G.Barr obtains rapid insight into brand sales

*Gaining comprehensive business intelligence with an IBM solution from Barrachd*

A.G.Barr has been making soft drinks since 1875, and now manufactures and markets some of the UK's most popular soft-drink brands, including IRN-BRU, Rubicon, Barr Carbonates, Orangina and Strathmore Spring Water. Based in Cumbernauld, Scotland, the company also has manufacturing sites in Forfar, Pitcox, Mansfield and Tredegar, as well as several regional offices and sales branches across the UK. It employs approximately 1,000 people, and generated revenues of over £201 million in 2009-2010.

A.G.Barr's brand portfolio has grown considerably over the past few years, especially as a result of high-profile acquisitions such as Rubicon. The increasing diversity of the company's products and the need to market effectively to different groups of consumers have led to a greater focus on the collection and analysis of accurate sales data from a brand perspective.

“We realised that we needed to shift our perspective away from production-related reporting, and towards a more demand-centric approach, looking at which customers in which areas were buying which brands, and gaining a better breakdown of profitability for each product,” says Alex Short, Finance Director at A.G.Barr. “However, our three main sales channels – wholesale orders, telesales and direct sales to independent retailers – utilise three different IT systems to manage their data, and it was difficult to consolidate and analyse the information in a timely and efficient way.”

## Creating a single source of truth

Creating a sales report across all the company's brands could take up to ten days to complete, which meant that the business could not respond quickly to fix problems or take advantage of new opportunities. Moreover, the data collection had to be done manually in spreadsheets, occupying several employees in the commercial finance department and preventing them from working on more value-adding tasks. In addition, consolidating data from several different sources often caused inconsistencies, which raised doubts about the accuracy of the reports.

“We needed to find a faster, more efficient and more reliable way of analysing our sales data,” says Short. “We already had some experience of using an IBM Cognos business intelligence solution on a small scale, and we knew it could potentially be extended to provide a powerful reporting tool for the whole business. But first we needed to establish a ‘single source of truth’ for our sales data.”



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## Benefits

- Supports a transformation in operational philosophy from a primarily supply-based model to a more customer-centric brand-aware approach
  - Facilitates decision-making, allowing A.G.Barr to identify and address problems before they affect the business
  - Enabled the creation of sophisticated brand sales reports within ten minutes of the monthly close – a task which could previously take up to ten days
  - Allowed the commercial finance department to move two full-time staff away from low-level number-crunching and into more valuable and productive roles
  - Provided a 'single source of truth' for sales data, giving the business a firm basis for timely and accurate analytics.
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## Expert solution

A.G.Barr consulted Barrachd, a Scottish IBM Business Partner that specialises in business analytics solutions, and asked them to help design a technical architecture that would automatically consolidate data from the company's systems and act as a single source of truth. Barrachd recommended IBM InfoSphere Balanced Warehouse® – a solution that includes IBM InfoSphere Warehouse together with a high-performance IBM System x® server and IBM System Storage® DS3000 series storage.

“The advantage of the Balanced Warehouse solution is that it's more or less a data warehouse in a box,” explains Robbie Crawford, Director at Barrachd. “It's simple to deploy and it offers excellent performance with no bottlenecks, because it has been specifically designed for data warehouse workloads.”

Short adds: “Barrachd worked well with us to design the architecture and help us integrate the Balanced Warehouse with our sales systems. The data structures were more complex than we anticipated, and we needed to undertake quite a lot of data cleansing before we could import it into the Balanced Warehouse – so Barrachd's expertise was extremely important to the success of the project.”

## Cognos analytics

The Balanced Warehouse now collects data from the company's three main sales systems: a QAD ERP system, which is used to manage the wholesale orders that form approximately two-thirds of the company's business; a Siebel CRM system, which handles telesales; and a smaller legacy sales system that manages direct sales to independent retailers in the Scottish market. The data is automatically checked and validated, giving the company confidence that its sales figures are complete and accurate.

*“Cognos is enabling us to move away from a spreadsheet culture and is giving us a much faster and more flexible way to handle and deliver reporting.”*

Alex Short, Finance Director at A.G.Barr

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## Solution Components

**Software**

- IBM Cognos 8 Business Intelligence
- IBM InfoSphere™ Warehouse

**Hardware**

- IBM System x

**Services**

- Barrachd, an IBM Business Partner
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On top of the Balanced Warehouse, A.G.Barr uses IBM Cognos 8 Business Intelligence as its business analytics and reporting solution.

“Cognos is enabling us to move away from a spreadsheet culture and is giving us a much faster and more flexible way to handle and deliver reporting,” says Short. “Instead of our salespeople taking time compiling reports manually, they can just log into Cognos and download the data they need straight into PowerPoint® – so they can concentrate on the more important work of selling.

“Equally, Cognos gives the commercial finance team the ability to make a more valuable contribution to the business. We can produce and distribute daily and weekly sales figures. When we want to run the monthly sales report, broken down by brand, customer and gross margins, we can do it ten minutes after the monthly close. In fact, we can even run provisional figures for the month in week one or week two, which helps us predict, identify and address problems before they actually affect the business.”

### Adding value to the business

By shifting the emphasis away from manual information collection and consolidation and towards analysis, the combination of Cognos 8 Business Intelligence and InfoSphere Balanced Warehouse has enabled A.G.Barr to add more value to the business.

“I don’t want our people to have to spend their time crunching numbers and worrying about whether their data is complete and accurate,” explains Short. “I want them to be adding value to the business by providing useful analyses that support good decision-making. Barrachd have helped us achieve this through the rapid and effective implementation of the IBM Cognos and InfoSphere solutions.”

### For more information

To learn more about IBM software, contact your IBM sales representative or visit: [ibm.com](http://ibm.com)

To learn more about products, services and solutions from Barrachd, visit: [barrachd.co.uk](http://barrachd.co.uk)

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