



When less is more: From 17,000 to 2,000 reports

We have successfully moved to Cognos Analytics, delivered reporting automation and improved productivity. The way we use our data is much more efficient.

We have come a long way from where we were and are really happy with the outcome.”

– Phil Gilbert, General Manager Finance, GPC Asia Pacific



GPC Asia Pacific is the largest automotive aftermarket parts supplier in Australia and New Zealand. They resell and distribute through 556 stores, 12 advanced distribution centres and a team of more than 6,200. GPC services a vast trade and retail market by holding more than 80,000 SKUs in their permanent product range, with access to a further 1,000,000 items through their global suppliers. They have annual sales of more than A\$1.5 billion.

Challenge

GPC was using Oracle Discoverer as its primary data extraction tool. However, Oracle was discontinuing support for the product, therefore they had to find an alternative.

This was a massive undertaking. Discoverer had been used for more than 20 years at GPC and was well-established. It was a key tool widely used by over 650 users across the business, from finance to merchandise, category, product and logistics.

As part of the project there were 17,000 active reports – many of which were duplicated – to be assessed. Rather than just replicating what Discoverer could do, GPC took this opportunity to upgrade.

They wanted to move away from extracting data from Discoverer and reporting in Excel, and move to reporting directly from the newly chosen technology.

GPC needed:

- A system to replace Discoverer so they could retire it
- Greater efficiencies in the way they used data
- To de-duplicate and streamline reports

Solution

GPC first assessed tools including new Oracle, Microsoft and IBM products. Eventually they [chose IBM Cognos Analytics based on the full feature set it had.](#)

QMetrix created a Proof of Concept and from the pre-selection process GPC was confident QMetrix had the capability to implement and be the right partner to drive a successful outcome.

Understand and assess

QMetrix first spoke to different business departments to find out what they needed to migrate out of Discoverer and build in Cognos Analytics. They then evaluated how to combine, enrich and make the reports more flexible.

This was complex. There were nearly 20,000 queries saved in Discoverer and these were largely uncontrolled and duplicated.

There could be 2 queries that appeared to be doing the same thing, but gave a different answer because of varied conditions and filters.

One of Cognos Analytics' strengths is its ability to customise in depth and be flexible.

QMetrix built reports that were much more sophisticated and with more parameters. Instead of having many similar reports, users can refer to one key report and filter based on what they need. By using a similar query, everyone receives a consistent answer.

All up, this process enabled the number of reports and queries to be reduced from 17,000 down to 2,000 core reports.

Additionally, GPC no longer needs to go into Discoverer every day to export and extract data.

They can now just log in to Cognos Analytics and run the reports, which can also be shared directly so everyone accesses a central copy rather than maintaining their own content.

Reports can also be scheduled to run – so people automatically get an email with an attachment, rather than having to log in.

John McCure, Pricing Manager at GPC says, "Knowing the data is one thing but understanding why or how we use it can be tricky. QMetrix made the effort to really understand it – even parts I don't fully understand – so they could implement it well".

Integrate and build

There were 400 unique source database tables and 20,000 fields to be modelled, multiplied across 3 different schemas.

QMetrix leveraged Discoverer's metadata stored in the existing database and mapped that to the Cognos Framework model, reducing project time.

GPC Asia Pacific's solution



Business Intelligence and Analytics consulting

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Instead of having 3 different data models to maintain as they previously did, QMetrix built one framework model which could be pointed to the different schemas.

Access and security

Initially users were locked into what tables and rows they could see for each report. QMetrix demonstrated that GPC could get more from the business if access was widened. For example, if New Zealand built a good sales report, Australia could use it too.

This meant everyone could see more information unless it was highly restricted. At the same time, from a security standpoint, less maintenance was needed, while not compromising on security.

Training

With more than 650 users across nearly every department of the business, it was a challenge getting users up to speed. Training involved a mix of classroom style training and online training materials.

With input from GPC, the latter was created by QMetrix specific to GPC's data and environment with Discoverer-like terminology so users would more easily understand how the new and old functions related.

There were also videos and additional advanced level topics included with the training documents.

Supplier reporting

In a subsequent project phase, GPC wanted to start a journey to get suppliers interacting with their data, including being able to see it in real-time. Previously the merchandise team would run reports for hundreds of suppliers.



This idea was pitched to the suppliers who saw value in having a self-service portal and were even prepared to contribute to the cost of getting it up and running.

QMetrix took on this additional requirement and turned it around quickly. Now, suppliers can proactively log in and see their sales, current stock levels and other information.

This is particularly useful for large suppliers who log on daily to see how sales are tracking across their network, and can actively target what they need to do to increase sales.

Project timeline and team

The whole project lasted 2 years, with QMetrix consultants on-site to focus on the project and provide continuity.

John says, "The QMetrix team was great and if we wanted something changed it happened quickly. They were based in our office and it was handy for users in the business to be able to talk to the same person throughout."

Impact

For GPC Asia Pacific

Successfully moved all content from Discoverer to Cognos Analytics

De-duplicated, streamlined and enriched reports, going from 17,000 to 2,000 reports

Delivered reporting automation and improvements to productivity

A self-serve tool for 650+ users, with 90% of the data for the report available within Cognos itself

Implemented a supplier reporting portal, empowering suppliers to self-serve and leading to better customer service and sales



QMetrix was very responsive and worked really well with our teams.

They clearly knew the Cognos Analytics tool. They got a comprehensive understanding of our data and in a lot of cases knew our data better than many in our business.

From the pre-selection process through to selecting a vendor, we were confident QMetrix had the capability – and they've proven to be a good partner".

–Phil Gilbert, General Manager Finance, GPC Asia Pacific

QMetrix

QMetrix provides professional advisory services that empower our clients to operate with the agility needed in today's business environment. Our corporate Budgeting and Planning, Master Data Management, and Business Intelligence and Analytics solutions help to drive better business performance.

We work together with clients to achieve the right outcome for their unique business, providing end-to-end solutions from analysis to design and delivery. We serve clients across Australia and have offices in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

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