

Redwood Business Solutions

Making web-based report distribution a reality.

At A Glance

Industry

- Distribution

Environment

- HP OpenVMS, Windows NT, Linux
- Compaq Proliant 3000 servers, IBM xSeries Server
- Oracle-database RDBMS
- VISTA X4, Cognos Business Intelligence
- 2500 reports published each month

Key Challenges

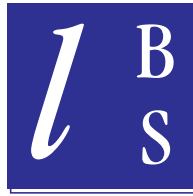
- Inefficient methods of delivering information to customers
- Rising costs in traditional paper based methods of report distribution
- Lack of timely information to client publishers

The Solution

- A central repository for documents from all the various applications and systems
- Quick and easy Web access to business information
- Ability to convert reports into Excel spreadsheets

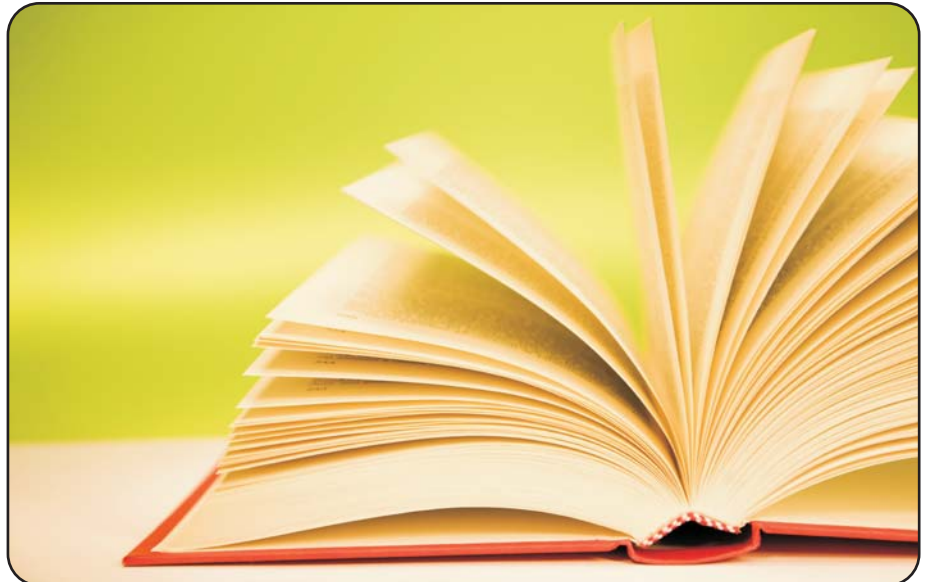
Key Benefits

- Month-end reports available immediately to clients
- A reduction of 65% in the printing of reports
- Additional 15 clients won due to the differentiated level of service offered



Report2Web Spells Success For Littlehampton Book Services

When Littlehampton Book Services set its objective of offering a differentiated distribution service to its publishers, the business knew that by allowing its customers complete access to their business data it would not only raise service levels but reduce costs at the same time. Redwood's Report2Web played a major part in achieving this objective.



Littlehampton Book Services (LBS) is the UK's 4th largest book distributor, providing a full distribution service to its 58 different client publishers including invoicing, customer service, data maintenance, as well as value-added services such as stickering and shrink-wrapping. Over 50 million books are delivered, stored and shipped worldwide annually from the LBS warehouse in Durrington, West Sussex, UK, so an efficient operation is required to ensure the smooth running of the business.

In 1999 LBS had literally become a victim of its own success when its IT and warehouse infrastructure was unable to support the increase in transactions it was seeing. In addition the management team were faced with a long term goal of better serving their existing customers, attracting new clients and re-establishing LBS as one of the leading UK distributors.

A critical factor in achieving this objective was LBS' commitment to providing an efficient information delivery framework from which all of its client publishers could have easy access to their business critical data, via the Internet 24x7, from anywhere in the world.

Timely Access to Information

Nigel Montgomery, Group IT Director at LBS takes up the story: "Our client publishers are reliant upon us for accurate information to make decisions. The publishing industry has a reputation for being rather antiquated in the way we do

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Nigel Montgomery
Group IT Director, LBS



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things, and information delivery from distributors to publishers has historically been weak and inflexible.”

Montgomery continues: “Our existing way of distributing information to our customers was inflexible and limited to online enquiries and paper based reports. We also had a problem with drowning our customers with voluminous reports on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. We were spending over £75,000 per year on paper and printer consumables alone. In an attempt to reduce our paper consumption we regularly contacted our clients to ask if any reports were no longer required or relevant. While this went some way to containing the volumes, it was clear that there had to be a better way.”

LBS needed a solution that allowed it to offer its publishers a better service and one that provided the clients information, anytime and anywhere, all at a reduced cost.

A Three-sided Information Delivery Strategy

The LBS Information Delivery Framework consists of 3 major components:

- **A traditional on-screen data enquiry tool**
- **A Web-based report distribution solution to replace paper-based delivery of information**
- **A business intelligence solution allowing the building of ad hoc reports from the data available**

Redwood Software was chosen to provide a Web-based report distribution solution enabling all the standard reports that were produced on a regular basis to be presented to client publishers via a Web browser. Report2Web was chosen as an alternative way of sending clients their reports.

Montgomery comments: “Initially we viewed Report2Web as a pure replacement for the paper based reports we were sending to clients, but the solution has evolved into so much more.

Report2Web not only allows us to deliver reports faster and more accurately to publishers over the Web, but with the implementation of the Excel conversion and Filter features, the information can be manipulated by the end-user as well.”

Today, Report2Web is being used as a repository for all the reports generated out of the VISTA system. Reports for each client publisher showing stock levels, order history, sales, etc., are presented in a logical folder structure from which clients can access their daily, weekly and monthly reports. Instead of being printed and distributed in hard copy format, the information is being stored and secured on the LBS server. Users are then able to access their information via a Web browser, by clicking on the links to their reports.

Montgomery adds: “Our clients love Report2Web’s ease of use and the fact that they can get their reports on time, every time. The speed at which we can get the reports into the Report2Web system has eliminated the time we used to spend on printing, collating, boxing up and distributing reports to each of our publishers. The Filter feature has allowed us to filter the information in the reports based on specific requirements, for example by geography or by sales rep.”

“Report2Web’s ability to convert reports into Excel has given our users their data in a format that they can manipulate, saving time in not having to re-key information and avoiding manual errors. The annotation feature is another useful tool that allows our users to add comments within a report for colleagues to review, thus allowing the system to be used as a pseudo-workflow tool.”

Pragmatic Bottom Line Benefits

LBS has taken a rather pragmatic approach in calculating its Return on Investment (ROI). Montgomery continues: “We estimate that it’s been a two year ROI. When we take into account all the efficiency improvements, distribution costs, manpower savings it becomes quite complicated to calculate, but the savings are self evident.”

“At month-end, it used to take up to 4 days for the paper based reports to arrive at the client publishers. With Report2Web, these reports are now available immediately. We’ve also stopped printing 65% of the reports produced.”

Montgomery concludes: “We have been so pleased with Report2Web and what it offers our publishers that we have set up a demo site of reports that we show to prospective new clients who are always impressed. Our future plans for the system include tighter integration of Report2Web with the VISTA system to allow the ad hoc reports requested by users to be immediately published into Report2Web without any involvement from IT.”

