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I have been working with a national dairy foods manufacturer over recent months, reviewing their business reporting and creating new reports. Using Hyperion, an Oracle-owned business intelligence application formerly developed by Brio, relational data from multiple sources can be interrogated to produce meaningful reports for analysis in all areas of the business. The limitations of the ERP system in this organisation have been overcome through a number of custom designed Access database applications, which pull data from the ERP system and combine user input information to manage areas such as transport, sales promotions, forecasting, budgets and claims.

Business Intelligence reporting in this organisation is mature, with several hundred report formats accumulated over a number of years. The challenge has been to gain an immediate understanding of the business, examine existing reports, optimising data table references and re-publish reports under the **Hyperion Intelligence Server** web interface. Through consultation with users obsolete reports have been deleted or re-designed and new reports have been created.

The IT team in this organisation takes a centralised approach to information management, particularly in relation to reporting and analysis. Using Microsoft Data Translation Services the ERP and other database tables are interrogated periodically (eg: hourly, daily, etc) to create read only data tables in the **data warehouse** database. Most Hyperion reporting is done from these tables, reducing the load on the ERP system and eliminating the risk of record locking and "slowdowns". Data manipulation is possible and effective control is maintained over user data queries.

Generally the following strategies apply:

**Excel Spreadsheets** – recommended where the user is required to enter data or run complex calculations 'on the fly'. This may involve data query results from the data warehouse or stand-alone information. User entered variables and data sets are possible without having to update a central database and re-query to obtain results. Instant re-calculation allows for quick 'what if' analysis. Disadvantages include lost/inaccessible files, data/formulae integrity issues and possibly complex data update routines.

**SQL/Access Databases** – where a business process or data collection requirement cannot be met through the ERP system, custom applications are developed using SQL databases under an MS Access front end (ie: user interface). These allow existing information from the ERP and other systems to be combined with additional data sets maintained through the Access interface. Development and deployment of these applications is rapid and responsive to changing needs. Complex spreadsheet routines are replaced by robust, centralised applications.



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**Hyperion (Brio) Reports** – where data analysis is concerned, Hyperion reports provide a reliable published solution, securely accessible via a web browser. These reports are recommended where pivot analysis, charts and dashboards are needed to examine data without additional data entry or manipulation by the user. The reports are flexible enough to allow users to filter and drill-down into pivot tables and reports can be automatically scheduled for distribution by email. The complexity of setting up the queries, tables, pivots and reports in Hyperion is offset by the reduction in time spent duplicating and re-creating reports by multiple users.

For further information contact:

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