enlighten designs
WEBSITE DESIGN & SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

New Zealand IT Firm Helps Organizations Gain Insight Easily and Affordably with Microsoft BI Tools

Partner: Enlighten Designs
Website: www.enlighten.co.nz
Customer Size: 63 employees
Country or Region: New Zealand
Industry: Professional services—IT services

Partner Profile
Located in Hamilton, New Zealand, Enlighten Designs provides application development, systems integration, and website design services.

Software and Services
- Microsoft Office
  – Microsoft Excel 2013
- Services
  – Microsoft Office 365
  – Microsoft Power BI for Office 365

"By using Power BI to analyze data and keep students enrolled, schools can save millions of dollars in funding and, more importantly, improve the country's level of education."

Damon Kelly, Chief Executive Officer, Enlighten Designs

Enlighten Designs, a leading application developer and systems integrator in New Zealand, wanted to ensure that all of its customers—including small businesses and schools—could benefit from business intelligence (BI) tools. To unlock data, the company is helping customers implement Microsoft Power BI for Office 365, which works smoothly with Microsoft Excel 2013. As a result, Enlighten Designs customers are improving insight with an affordable, cloud-based solution that can be easily used by people at all levels of an organization.

Business Needs

Based in Hamilton, New Zealand, Enlighten Designs provides services including application and website development, systems integration, and hosted solutions. A Microsoft partner with multiple gold and silver competencies, the company won the APAC Collaboration and Content Partner of the Year Award from Microsoft in 2013.

Although Enlighten Designs provides solutions for diverse industries, each with its own unique needs, the company has noticed a common theme. "We've found a few things hold true across all of our customers," says Damon Kelly, Chief Executive Office at Enlighten Designs.

"There is a rise in demand for business intelligence, because everyone has more data than they've ever had before. Our customers are not just looking at gaining insights from their data, but also want to make organizational decisions from it."

To help its customers pull together and gain insight from disparate data sources, Enlighten Designs needed more than just integration and analytics tools. The company also wanted to offer a solution that would be easy to use. Kelly says, "Another big trend we're seeing is that our customers want to unlock information in such a way that business users can ask questions and get answers themselves

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instead of waiting for IT to generate a report."

The drive to promote greater self-sufficiency aligned with a need for better agility and flexibility. Ordinary business users wanted to easily discover and work with data from multiple sources themselves, without waiting for IT to provide a complex solution. Kelly says, "Often, by the time the BI project was underway and they got results back, the business landscape had changed so much that the information just wasn't relevant anymore."

In addition to ease of use, Enlighten Designs wanted to provide a solution that could be implemented quickly and affordably, without the barrier of having to purchase and install on-premises infrastructure.

Solution
Enlighten Designs has helped many organizations implement on-premises data warehouses and collaboration solutions. With more of its customers migrating to the cloud, the company decided to implement several proof-of-concept projects based on Microsoft Power BI for Office 365 and Microsoft Excel 2013 spreadsheet software. Power BI provides a set of highly visual, cloud-based reporting services that work seamlessly with familiar Microsoft Office applications such as Excel and the Microsoft PowerPoint presentation graphics program. The solution can also improve collaboration. Enlighten Designs customers could either share information in spreadsheets or work together in the cloud on Power BI sites.

The company is discovering that Power BI appeals to customers at various stages of cloud implementation. For example, organizations interested in supplementing on-premises solutions might want to use Power View and Power Map for Excel to create interactive charts and graphs or visually explore geospatial data. Customers interested in a complete migration to the cloud are often drawn to Power Query for Excel, which easily discovers, combines, and

analyzes data from both corporate and public sources.

Benefits
With a Microsoft Power BI solution, Enlighten Designs is helping its customers improve data discovery and analysis, simplify implementation, and get better access to data. As a result, the company is gaining new business opportunities.

Simplified Data Discovery and Analysis
Enlighten Designs believes that better, more broadly accessible BI tools will benefit not just individual businesses but the country as a whole. "The education industry in New Zealand is in part funded by the number of full-time students it has," explains Kelly. "By using Power BI to analyze data and keep students enrolled, schools can save millions of dollars in funding and, more importantly, improve the country's level of education."

Easy, Affordable Implementation
Rapid and affordable implementation appeals to schools and smaller businesses, which can take advantage of BI capabilities with a simple subscription and avoid installing costly, on-premises infrastructure. "A solution like Power BI is a game-changer for organizations such as education that typically don't have big budgets," says Kelly. "Now they can get great BI tools when previously they couldn't afford them."

Improved User Adoption Through Familiar Apps and Interactive Features
Working with familiar office programs and highly visual, interactive BI features also drives user adoption. Kelly says, "We're finding that the ability to use BI that's built into familiar tools—for example Power View for Excel—has been really important to customers because they don't need to learn new skills and undertake additional training."

Using Excel with Power BI helps Enlighten Design customers share information more

easily too. "One of the most important functions of any BI program is the ability to export information into Excel," notes Kelly. "Users have more flexible ways to access and share data, and Power BI features have made working with spreadsheets a progressively more rich experience."

Better Platform for Advanced BI
The company looks forward to offering its customers even more capabilities. "We're getting really excited about the convergence of devices and services," says Kelly. "For example, how can people use a stylus or touch to interact with data? New ways of working with and visualizing information mean that they're not just looking at a static report. Our customers can see changes over time and gain a better understanding of their business as a result."

New Business Opportunities
The solution is opening up new business opportunities for Enlighten Designs. The company says that education customers who try the free version of Office 365 are now moving to paid subscriptions to take advantage of Power BI. For example, a New Zealand polytechnic, Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec), is using the Microsoft BI platform to gain deeper insight into student behavior and identify which students are struggling and in danger of dropping out.

With Power BI, Wintec can not only track trends across the student population, but also drill down to find and support individual students. "At first, Wintec looked at traditional databases, but then the institute began using the Microsoft BI platform to tap into systems such as Microsoft Lync, which it was using as an outbound call center," says Kelly. "With Power BI, schools can easily augment their existing information by pulling data from many different places, including external data such as social feeds."