

Gordon Trucking



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Nathan Anderson, Data Warehouse Architect, Gordon Trucking Inc.

Gordon Trucking Inc. (GTI) has a proud tradition of family ownership starting with Jay Gordon and is still run by the Gordons today. GTI primarily operates Century and Columbia class 8 Freightliner trucks, among others. Its trailer fleet is made up of combinations of 2-, 3-, and 4-axle high-cube sets and 53-foot and 48-foot temperature-controlled trailers.

GTI has more than 50 years of experience in trucking, and its executive board has given the company the vision to see the future of the long-haul industry. GTI has long been a believer in leveraging the power of technology to create an efficient workplace staffed with effective people. Today, GTI serves the continental states, Canada, and Mexico.

In 2006, GTI decided it was time to do something about its data, stored on disparate systems across the company. Its business analysts were finding it increasingly difficult to develop advanced reports because they lacked access to the data and insight on how the data was designed. Management needed to find an easy-to-use BI solution that could provide a central repository of information that was reliable, accurate, and scalable. GTI selected a solution from Cognos, an IBM company, and has realized a 50 percent decrease in report processing time. In addition, the company has been able to use the data to streamline business operations, providing significant labor and cost savings.

Industry:

- Long-haul trucking

Geography:

- US, Canada, Mexico

Information needs:

- Shortened report cycle processing time
- Reliable and accurate data
- Ease of use
- Web-based, scalable system

Platforms:

- Windows
- IBM DB2
- IBM AS/400

Users:

- 100

Functional areas of deployment:

- Sales and Marketing
- Operations

Solutions:

- IBM Cognos 8 BI

Benefits:

- Reliable and accurate data for making better daily business decisions
- Real-time access to information
- Easy-to-use interface
- Streamlined and efficient workflow process and reporting
- Scalable system



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Challenges faced

Last year, Gordon Trucking realized that the majority of its data resided on multiple servers and within multiple databases. According to Nathan Anderson, Data Warehouse Architect at GTI, one of the company's challenges was trying to draw all the data into one report. GTI had been using Excel spreadsheets and various in-house reporting tools to mine its data, but found these tools were insufficient.

"We decided we needed to build a data warehouse. To do this, we needed a solution that was affordable and easy to use, and did not require in-depth programming skills," states Anderson.

One of GTI's goals was to help alleviate a portion of the workload from its IBM AS/400 in an effort to make the reports run faster and provide a level of data visibility that wasn't available using Excel and the other in-house tools. GTI's biggest challenge was finding a solution that was easy to use for its non-technical business analysts, who would be accessing the system the majority of the time. The solution also needed to be Web-based, provide reliable data, and scale easily to accommodate future growth.

Strategy followed

GTI evaluated several BI vendors, including Business Objects and Microsoft, before selecting Cognos.

"It was a close decision among all of the solutions, but we felt Microsoft's offering would not integrate well, so we passed on their product. The decision came down to Business Objects and Cognos. Ultimately, we selected Cognos because we liked the look and feel of its Web-based product, and because we were very happy with the level of service we received from their customer service rep," remarks Anderson.

GTI went live with IBM Cognos 8 BI in July of 2007, and worked with systems integrator, Perkins Consulting, to implement the solution. Currently, IBM Cognos 8 BI has been rolled out to Marketing, Sales, and Operations, and has been integrated with GTI's IBM DB2 database. According to Anderson, the company is in the process of standardizing on Cognos and the company-wide roll-out is taking place in phases across each department. Anderson estimates that each phased roll-out will take about six to nine months to complete from start to finish.

Currently, GTI has 100 Cognos users, and expects that number to grow to 400 to 500 people once all of the phased roll-outs are completed. The majority of users are business analysts and managers who need to run reports related to operations and sales.

Benefits realized

Before Cognos, GTI had a number of reports that would take four hours to build on a computer using Excel. With IBM Cognos 8 BI, it now takes 20 seconds. In addition, there is no programming involved, as the data is always present and can be pulled into any type of report or scorecard.

"At the outset, we just wanted to replicate four reports and maybe six or seven tables using Cognos. We now run 40 tables and more than 50 reports due to the power of Cognos and the recognition that it could help people do their jobs better and more efficiently. In no time, it went from this little success project to a big, company-wide initiative," states Anderson.

With Cognos, GTI estimates that report times dropped by more than 50 percent! Now, weekly reports are ready for clients by Monday 8:00 a.m. instead of mid-week or later. The saved time allows GTI's business analysts to study the results and investigate details the same day, and the users can be much more confident in the data. According to Anderson, employees are most impressed with the Cognos solution's ease of use.

"With Excel, we had to program a code using a specific driver that was not familiar to everyone in the company," says Anderson. "This would often inhibit use, because people did not know how to program the code. Cognos has been a great replacement tool that everybody just loves because there is no programming and it's so simple to learn and use."

In terms of performance and results, GTI has realized significant time and cost savings by being able to monitor and adjust the data in its transactional system. Cognos provides an open window to the operating floor, enabling management to see all the activities and transactions, which allows them to make critical business adjustments and reduce unnecessary cost.

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“Going forward, all reports developed will be based on processes that identify criteria for success and failure. These reports will drill down into details matching the structure of the process document, which will better streamline operations across the company,” states Anderson.

About Cognos, an IBM company

Cognos, an IBM company, is the world leader in [business intelligence](#) and [performance management](#) solutions. It provides world-class enterprise planning and BI software and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. Cognos was acquired by IBM in February 2008*. For more information, visit <http://www.ibm.com/software/data/> and <http://www.cognos.com>.

**As a result of the acquisition, product names have now changed to reference IBM at the beginning of the software or service.*