

Apex Drives Data Analytics in Manufacturing with Qlik Sense

“The benefits of today’s technology bring speed and efficiency to the table. Today we can identify insights for immediate decisions, which should give us a competitive advantage.”

– Christos Gerasis, Operations Director, Apex Cordset Technologies



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Overview

Since 1986 Apex Cordset Technologies (Pty) Ltd has shown continuous growth, becoming the leading developer and manufacturer of a wide range of quality cordsets, extension cords, moulded plug and socket systems, wire harnesses and cable accessory products for the global electrical and electronics markets.

As the largest power cord manufacturer in Africa, a variety of products are manufactured for both commercial and industrial applications. Apex boasts 14 000m² in facilities – consisting of five plants – situated in the heart of Gauteng’s industrial hub.

Manufacturing more than 120 000 plugs per day, the company is ISO9001:2015, OHSAS 18001:2007, and SMETA (Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit) accredited. Using state-of-the-art modular and fully automated machinery,

precision and consistent quality are guaranteed.

Apex continues to invest in new technology, skills training, equipment and machinery to maintain and improve its competitiveness.

Challenges

As a forward thinking organisation, Apex carefully pursued the collection and management of its data. With SAP Business One, the company ensures that its data is clean, of high integrity and available.

However, the collection of information is only part of the equation. Apex required assistance in analysing this data, while drawing meaningful reports.

The use of multiple software platforms presented integration issues, especially in terms of reporting.

“Prior to implementing Qlik, the ERP software and HR / Payroll systems in place did not offer meaningful reporting and analytics. Subsequently, the ecosystem requires that you either upgrade to HANA or purchase further add-ons. The problem comes in when you have several different platforms and you require to bring these together into one data set,” confirms Christos Gerasis, Operations Director at Apex.

It is important that the data is clean – and this was already achieved. It is as important that the information is understood.

Solution overview

Customer Name: Apex Cordset Technologies (Pty) Ltd

Industry: Largest power cord manufacturer in Africa, manufactures ancillary and related products

Function: Current: Sales and Order Analysis
Planned: Procurement, Purchasing, Inventory, Financial, Debtors & Creditors, HR & Payroll, Production)

Geography: Apex Industrial Sites, Benoni, Johannesburg, Gauteng

Challenges: Although Apex’s data was available, no tool was in place to analyse the data and provide reliable reports. A tool that could look across all software and databases was required. This would mean achieving a bird’s-eye-view across the board, rather than viewing siloed information.

Solution: Apex deployed Qlik Sense in 2017.

Benefits:

- The power of analysis and reporting
- The ability to identify and correct errors in data
- Empowering greater self-management and the meeting of KPIs
- Operational efficiencies through the understanding of data

Data Source Systems Database:

Most of the Apex ERP Systems are SQL databases, requiring a product agnostic application to analyse the data. Source data included SAP Business 1, Excel spreadsheets, and MS Sequel.

Solution overview

6 months

To implement Qlik Sense

Two models have been implemented and are proving fruitful. Another eight models are in the pipeline for the near future. While Apex's research began in the final quarter of 2016, the actual Qlik Sense implementation was launched in September 2017.

Time to value

Instant

Error identification

With the right analytics in place, Apex is empowered to identify human errors immediately. Anomalies are easily identifiable at a glance.

"Apex has been researching data analytics for almost 18 months. The problem with data analytics is understanding the data and defining what you are looking for. This task on its own is a challenge, let alone choosing the right platform to present this type of data in the way you want it," confirmed Gerasis.

While other software was considered, it appeared that the scope of analysis and application would be more limited than the Qlik solution. With the ability to place Qlik over any other software, there are no limitations to the visualisation of critical data.

Solution

While data analysis remains a learning curve for the entire organisation, the implementation of Qlik Sense is providing the opportunity to revolutionise the organisation from within.

"We will drive the ethos that knowledge is power. The more you know the better decisions you can make, and the better actions you can take," adds Gerasis.

Apex's management team is confident that Qlik Sense will, without a doubt, provide the company with access to powerful analytics on one platform.

While some change management will be required to inculcate a change in company culture and behaviour, Gerasis believes this is a process that will have a positive impact on operations. "I envision building the Qlik Sense tool to the point where we start every day with a 20-minute review, with a visual, dashboard representation, providing the correct guidance to better decision making."

The first Qlik Sense application implemented at Apex was a sales app. This involves the collection and analysis of sales driven data, including sales ordering and production ordering, while ensuring on-time delivery to customers. This app took only 15 days to develop, along with two other sales applications.

The two current models include:

- Sales: invoicing, credit notes (net effect), sales figures against previous years, new customers, and sales representative and executive performance (monetary and GP).
- Order Analysis: sales order analysis, tracking the sales order through to where it hits the production floor, time of the delivery, etc.

The implementation process was well managed both from Apex and Qlik's perspective. "We have a roadmap in place, and I am expecting the same progress as per the sales app for the new rollouts planned. While the HR and Payroll modules may present a bigger challenge, the real test will be in getting our machinery onto the platform. Which is why we have chosen to tackle these at the latter part of our roadmap. Our aim is to be build the experience as we roll out."

Benefits

Using Qlik Sense, Apex has identified errors in individual transactions that would not easily have been picked up.

"If we didn't have a platform like Qlik Sense, we would not be able to determine when human error is creeping in, especially in terms of sales lead times," says Gerasis. "All of a sudden a '1 to 3 times' lead time changes to 3000 with the slip of a finger. This is easy to pick up when looking at the data in Qlik Sense."

Apex will also be using the Qlik Sense tool to allow employees to track their own performance, managed against their KPIs. "This empowers employees to change their behaviour immediately, rather than waiting for an annual review to learn where their weaknesses lie; leaving no surprises to arise during appraisals."

On the operational side, Gerasis confirms that the tool will give employees greater power to double check their own work and correct errors before they have a knock-on effect.



This leads to a proactive approach to operations, rather than responding reactively. "In operations, the details are in the data," he confirms.

To Apex, the main benefit is that multiple data platforms (including Excel spreadsheets) are now reporting into one analytics platform, giving employees greater decision-making power.

The team will continue to build apps, while training staff to ensure they reap the full benefits on offer.

Advice for Qlik Implementation

Considering Apex's positive experience with Qlik Sense, Gerasis provides his top five tips for organisations considering partnering with SA Qlik Master Reseller:

- Check your data; make sure that it is clean data and of good integrity. This prevents conflicting results and setbacks once implemented.
- An in-house "champion" must be appointed to work alongside the Qlik personnel and drive the process forward.
- Scope the KPIs, define and understand what you want out of your data, keep it simple in the beginning and let it grow as your employees grow into this.
- Build a detailed end vision.
- This is a no brainer.

The Future

"Our dream is to become a multi-national. We believe that, with the Qlik platform, we will be in better a position to manage our business units across various sites," concludes Gerasis. "While this is the long-term view, in the medium term, the goal is to begin managing the Apex factory floors with Qlik. This will empower us to manage behaviour, providing people with the right data, the opportunity for self-regulation and, as a result, self-improvement."



South Africa Qlik Master Reseller (previously known as QlikView SA) has been a member of the EOH group of companies since 1 July 2014, facilitating a great partnership that aims to accelerate growth for Qlik in Southern Africa directly or through its specialized Partner channel. SA Qlik MR's portfolio of products meets customers' growing needs from reporting and self-service visual analysis to guided, embedded and custom analytics. Over 1800 customers rely on Qlik solutions to gain meaning out of information from varied sources, exploring the hidden relationships within data that lead to insights that ignite good ideas.

These solutions bridge the gap between traditional BI solutions and inadequate spreadsheet applications. The in-memory associative search technology that Qlik pioneered, pioneered the self-service BI category, allowing users to explore information freely rather than being confined to a predefined path of questions. Appropriate from SMB to the largest global enterprise, Qlik's self-service analysis can be deployed with data governance in days or weeks. The platform's app-driven model works with existing BI solutions, offering an immersive mobile and social, collaborative experience. Headquartered in Radnor, Pennsylvania, Qlik does business in more than 100 countries with over 40,000 customers globally. For more information, please visit www.saqlik.com.