



SHS Group drives smarter deals with 98 percent faster reporting on SAP HANA

With customer caution holding back growth in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry, how can companies maximize marketing and sales efforts to get their brands off the shelf and into shopping baskets?

Leading FMCG company SHS Group worked to understand consumer behavior, buying habits and market trends. The faster it could analyze the data, the faster it could adjust sales promotions and maximize product performance.

By deploying the SAP® HANA™ database, SHS Group can run reports 98 percent faster than before and has gained a 100-times boost to query performance, giving near-instant access to key information and driving smarter business decisions.

Helping sales teams work better

Founded in 1975, SHS Group owns

a range of world-recognized brands including WKD, Merrydown Cider, Bottlegreen and Shloer. The group also markets, sells and distributes products for other major grocery, beverage and pharmaceutical suppliers.

Headquartered in Belfast, Northern Ireland, SHS Group employs some 700 people across the UK and Ireland, and reports turnover of more than GBP400 million.

For SHS Group, the key to continued success lies in maximizing sales for both its own brands and those of its suppliers, many of whom are global consumer goods powerhouses. To support its sales and marketing efforts, the group employs a 120-strong sales team to liaise with brand owners and sellers. These salespeople need timely, accurate information on all aspects of product performance, sales activity, production and budgets to make smart deals.

Overview

Challenge

SHS Group needs fast insight into sales and product performance to ensure that its brands remain consumers' go-to choice, but slow reporting was holding teams back from maximizing opportunities.

Solution

To drive rapid reporting, SHS Group selected SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse, powered by SAP HANA, and worked with IBM Business Partner Centiq to deploy the IBM Systems solution for SAP HANA, based on IBM System x3950 X5 servers.

Key benefits

Reports can be generated 98 percent faster and query performance is 100 times quicker, giving teams the rapid insight they need to support more effective sales activity. Anticipated ROI in two to three years.

Business Challenge

Fast-moving consumer goods company SHS Group wanted to empower sales teams with timely, accurate information on all aspects of product performance, sales activity and market trends.

However, slow reporting dulled business insight and threatened to put the group at risk of losing out on opportunities to boost sales and business volumes.



Insatiable demand for information to drive success

SHS Group relies on integrated SAP ERP applications to run its business processes. The information delivered by these SAP ERP applications is crucial to the smooth running of daily operations across the group.

However, as SHS Group grew through acquisition and expanded its brand portfolio, the group found that existing systems were struggling to cope with the corresponding increase in data volumes.

John McLarnon, Head of Information Systems and Technology at SHS Group elaborates: “Our entire sales and marketing division, and our drinks division all run on an integrated SAP ERP instance. These areas generate an immense amount of data, and it was becoming more and more of a challenge to provide business users with timely access to the information they needed to perform analysis and reporting.

“To give an example, reporting performance was so slow that many of our salespeople would come in early in the morning to generate reports and print them off before heading out for on-site visits to clients. Users often had to run multiple reports that took many minutes to complete. Reports frequently

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Nigel Lyons

Operations Manager
SHS Group

timed out because our system could not cope with the volume of data that was being requested, requiring users to start from square one. The whole process was very time-consuming and immensely frustrating, and it was holding the business back from running as effectively as it could. We knew that we had to solve the performance issues if we were to help users become more empowered when it came to accessing SAP ERP data and performing analysis work.”

Moving to the next level with SAP HANA

With existing analytics systems struggling to keep pace with business demand for information, SHS Group



100 times
faster reporting

sought a solution that could help it get the most out of huge operational data volumes and enable faster, more accurate analysis and reporting. The group's search led it to SAP HANA – a powerful in-memory computing platform that allows businesses to access, model and analyze their SAP data in real time. After consulting with a team from SAP to evaluate the solution in greater depth, SHS Group was convinced and decided to deploy SAP NetWeaver® Business Warehouse (SAP NetWeaver BW), powered by SAP HANA.

“The decision to purchase SAP HANA happened quite quickly, and we wanted to make sure that we took all the necessary steps to guarantee a successful implementation,” comments Nigel Lyons, Operations Manager at SHS Group.

“This is why we approached Centiq to act as our implementation partner – we found them to be very focused in their vision and ability to deliver technology solutions. Centiq played a key role in advising us about the SAP HANA appliance market and was instrumental in helping us to select the right solution.”

In addition, SHS contracted Centiq to provide comprehensive managed service support for the SAP HANA solution. SHS can take advantage of Centiq's proven expertise and intelligent SAP monitoring—underpinned by the Centiq Monitiq systems management solution—to focus on business value realization rather than technical and operational support of the new SAP HANA technology.

Choosing easy scalability with an IBM solution

Nigel Lyons continues: “We ultimately chose the IBM® Systems solution for SAP HANA because we felt that it was the best fit for both our current and future needs. We wanted to start small, with a single node solution, but we also wanted the flexibility to easily scale out to a multi-node configuration further down the line if necessary. Unlike most vendors, who had a step increase in scaling that would require us to add a dedicated SAN at the back end,



Solution

To empower sales teams with fast, accurate reporting, SHS Group deployed SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse, powered by SAP HANA.

Together with IBM Business Partner Centiq, the group deployed the IBM Systems solution for SAP HANA, based on an IBM System x3950 X5 Workload Optimized server featuring powerful Intel Xeon E7 processors.

Centiq's SAP HANA expertise and managed services support ensured a smooth implementation and enabled SHS to focus on value realization.



Key Solution Components

Industry

Consumer Products

Applications

SAP® HANA™, SAP NetWeaver®

Business Warehouse

Hardware

IBM® Systems solution for SAP HANA, based on an IBM System x3950 X5 server with Intel® Xeon® E7-8870 processors

Software

**IBM General Parallel File System (GPFS™)
SUSE Linux Enterprise Server**

IBM Business Partner

Centiq Ltd.

the IBM solution offered a seamless scale-up thanks to the use of IBM GPFS™.”

The IBM Systems solution for SAP HANA is delivered on an IBM System x3950 X5 Workload Optimized server, featuring four 10-core Intel Xeon E7-8870 processors.

These top-of-the-line processors deliver performance designed to handle data-demanding workloads with improved scalability and increased memory and I/O capacity. Advanced reliability and security features work to maintain data integrity, and maximize the availability of mission-critical applications.

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server serves as the secure, open-source operating system platform for SAP HANA. SUSE Linux Enterprise is currently the recommended operating system for SAP HANA and is the leading platform for SAP solutions on Linux. It is also SAP’s development platform for Linux and is offered as an optimized solution for SAP solutions: SUSE Linux Enterprise for SAP Applications.

Reaping the benefits faster with rapid implementation

To ensure a smooth migration, SHS Group worked with Centiq to map

out its business requirements and put together a detailed implementation plan. The group performed extensive testing in a proof-of-concept environment in preparation for the migration.

“We put a lot of work into the planning and testing phases to ensure that any issues were resolved before we went into production,” notes John McLarnon. “Taking a cautious approach really paid off—the migration was very fast and trouble free. From start-to-finish, the entire project took just twelve weeks, and we completed the actual migration over the course of one weekend.

“We started the cut-over to the new environment on a Friday afternoon and were up-and-running by Saturday evening. We notified our core sales team that the migration had been completed on Sunday, and within hours we were getting great feedback—they couldn’t believe how fast reports were running on SAP HANA.

“We have received similarly positive feedback from users from all over the business now that the platform is live. In the past, performance issues meant that many people were reluctant to run in-depth reports. Now, data loading is 70 percent faster, reducing batch windows and ensuring that information

is always ready for reporting and analysis by the start of each day. With SAP HANA, users no longer need to ‘dumb down’ reports to avoid long wait times. Our staff say that they can investigate things immediately, and set up more complex reports that get to the answers quicker without the need for rework.”

Extreme data compression on the platform enabled SHS Group to reduce data volumes by a factor of three to four, freeing up several terabytes of storage space.

The reduction allows the group to delay investment in additional storage hardware, delivering valuable cost savings. Smaller volumes of data mean less management effort for IT teams, improving productivity, and allow the business to grow in a more controlled way.

Speeding insight with 100 times faster reporting

SAP HANA running on the powerful IBM System x3950 X5 enterprise server combines the speed and efficiency of in-memory processing with the ability to analyze massive amounts of business data. The platform allows SHS Group to instantly access all of its SAP transactional and analytical data, boosting reporting speeds and

providing near real-time visibility into business operations.

“We have seen an absolutely phenomenal performance improvement— with SAP HANA query performance is at least 100 times faster than before, and reports can be generated 98 percent faster on average. We have seen even greater speed gains for a number of key reports; for example, one of our profitability analysis reports used to take more than 500 seconds to run. With SAP HANA, the same report runs in 0.9 seconds – an uplift of a factor of almost 575.

“With SAP HANA, reporting works better than many of our users could have imagined—it has been groundbreaking in terms of the time it will save on day-to-day operations and over the course of the year. For our sales teams, near real-time reporting means that they no longer have to spend so much time waiting for reports to run. SAP HANA has freed up a lot more time for salespeople, so they can spend more of their day out visiting clients and partners, and less time in the office running reports. The business is confident that SAP HANA is really going to help improve the effectiveness of sales efforts—the more time that teams spend engaging with clients and sellers face-to-face, the

Business Benefits

- **Reports can be generated 98 percent faster on average, taking just seconds, not minutes.**
 - **Faster, deeper insight into operations helps sales and marketing teams optimize product performance.**
 - **100 times faster query performance and 70 percent faster data loading boosts staff productivity and drives rapid business insight.**
 - **Expected to deliver full ROI within two to three years.**
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more opportunities they have to build relationships and win more business.”

Empowering business users

With SAP HANA enabling lightning-fast reporting, the frustration and effort that used to come with analytical work has been eliminated. Whereas previously, many business users had a tendency to avoid reporting, there is now a willingness to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by SAP HANA to gain a better understanding of performance across all functional areas.

“We have met our goal of empowering more users to take greater advantage of analytics and reporting,” comments John McLarnon. “SAP HANA has opened up more of a self-service approach to reporting and creates new possibilities for our staff. People are no longer afraid to make mistakes – they can fail fast, learn what went wrong and carry on, which makes for a much more adaptable way of working.”

Rich possibilities for running a better business

Having already achieved impressive performance improvements with SAP HANA, SHS Group is working to take the next step in its analytics journey, using the platform to gain unprecedented insight into all areas of its operations and wider industry

activity. This new level of insight and agility will enable SHS Group to respond more quickly to business needs and competitive threats, and seize new opportunities to drive business growth.

John McLarnon concludes: “SAP HANA is already delivering huge value for the business. Based solely on the speed improvements we have seen, we anticipate a full return on investment in two to three years, which is fantastic. Beyond the performance enhancements, we have big plans around the analytics work we want to perform with the new platform; for example, we are planning to pull in data from point-of-sale systems and compare it with our own sales order data to see which stores are selling the most of our products and those that aren’t performing so well. That would allow us to realign distribution efforts to ensure that products are stocked in stores with the highest turnover – meaning more money for sellers and for our brand owners.

“For us, the true value of SAP HANA lies in how it delivers a completely new way of working and a new way of looking at our business data. We have only just begun to scratch the surface of the possibilities that SAP HANA offers, and we are very excited to see what the future holds.”



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