



The IBM Institute for Business Value discovers more from its data and increases efficiency of its Research Hub with MarketSight®

Background

Long known for its dominance in the computer hardware market, IBM® has transformed itself into a leading software and services company. IBM Global Business Services -- the company's technology services and consulting division - is the fastest growing part of IBM, with professionals serving clients in over 150 countries.

Within Global Business Services, IBM Business Consulting combines deep industry expertise with high-powered technology to unlock business value for its clients. At the heart of this industry expertise is a group of consultants who leverage their knowledge, along with findings from primary research studies, into white papers. This group, the Institute for Business Value (IBV), is a focused group of 60 consultants who conduct research and analysis in 17 industries and across 5 functional disciplines. It currently offers over 100 papers providing practical recommendations, built on a foundation of fundamental research. While the IBV is organized into sector specific ("core") teams that author these papers, the Research Hub assists all teams in analyzing the primary research.

This fundamental research comes in the form of large scale, directional surveys conducted among hundreds of chief executives and business leaders around the world. These surveys, which take months to conduct and analyze, uncover valuable findings and insights that are the underpinning for the group's white papers.

Challenge

As the analytical engine for the entire IBV, the Research Hub was constantly responding to internal requests. The Hub, made up of skilled analysts and statisticians, spent much of its time responding to these often basic requests, rather than focusing on the analyses that would provide critical insights for white papers. To manage the situation, the Research Hub sought a web-based solution that would:

- Quickly and easily analyze primary research data - much of it in the form of multi-response survey questions - gathered from hundreds of chief executives and business leaders
- Empower core teams to access research data and conduct basic analysis on their own
- Enable the Research Hub to focus on the more complex analyses

"By conducting hypothetical-driven surveys, we have dual quantitative studies going on -- multivariate and univariate," notes Stephen Ballou, Director, IBV Research Hub. "Our core teams were dependent on the basic cross-tabular analyses, but didn't often understand the significance of the deep statistical work. We needed a tool that would make basic analysis easier, enabling us to offload certain requests and allowing us to spend our time and knowledge on the more sophisticated analysis that differentiate IBM from the rest."

Customer Profile

International Business Machines Corporation
(NYSE: IBM)

Industry: Computer services, hardware, and software
Revenue: \$91 Billion (2006)
Employees: 366,486

Challenge

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Solution

In 2005, the IBM Research Hub adopted MarketSight, an intuitive, web-based analysis tool that allows users to quickly and iteratively analyze data. Each year, the IBV conducts a handful of primary research studies. In 2006, the Global CEO Study interviewed 765 chief executives on the topic of innovation. In-person interviews were followed up with online surveys; responses from these in-depth surveys accounted for nearly 85% of the data collected.

Analyzing data and disseminating results from multi-response survey questions was an arduous task. “Before adopting MarketSight, we used WinCross to analyze survey results,” remembers Ballou. “With WinCross, users need to know how to write a program to analyze the data, so it was impossible for us to allow the core teams to access this data quickly. We became a bottleneck in the development of white papers; the teams wanted the results, yet we needed a good deal of time to complete even the most basic analyses.”

Now, with MarketSight in place, Ballou and his team can easily upload data and create multi-response variables that make it simple to analyze “top box” or multiple response “check all that apply” questions. They can also run dynamic, on-the-fly cross-tab analyses and banner reports that the core teams need. “In the past, core teams would request a specific view of the data, depending on their specific sector, and it would take time to produce individual reports,” said Ballou. “Now, we provide teams with one static set of cross-tabs, based on a certain set of variables, and they can tailor the reports to fit their particular needs.” Ballou and his team provide each team member with a user name and password, so that they access only the information they need within the application. They currently have more than 25 team members accessing data through MarketSight.

And it is not just the cross-tab analyses, but also PowerPoint slides, that Ballou and his team provide. With a single mouse click in MarketSight, charts are created, providing visual representations of data that help communicate findings. Charts are easily exported to PowerPoint, and the core teams can adjust them as needed for white papers. Before MarketSight, the Research Hub would export charts to Excel and tailor them for each specific request, a time-consuming process.

While MarketSight has certainly made data analysis easier for the Research Hub, it has also enabled the core teams to access the data, and run basic analyses like never before. “At any one time, our relatively small group juggles 8 or 9 projects,” notes Ballou. “So although individual requests from core teams might be basic, these requests used to take countless hours to complete with the less intuitive tools we had in place, like SAS® and SPSS®. And because the learning curve for these tools was too high, it didn’t make sense to introduce them to the individual teams.” Now the teams are empowered to access the data themselves in MarketSight, a win-win for everyone. And it was easy to get the teams up and running. “The customer service team at MarketSight was terrific in training the IBV so that they now have the skills they need to work with the application,” said Ballou. “They can create cross tabular analyses and charts on-the-fly. They have adopted a remarkable skill set that enables them to be more efficient in developing white papers.”

Results

With MarketSight in place, the Institute for Business Value’s Research Hub is now able to:

- Analyze and disseminate results from large-scale multi-response surveys in less time
- Empower core teams to access research data and conduct basic analysis on their own
- Spend more time on the complex analysis that can differentiate IBM from its competition

“Without a doubt, MarketSight is part of our core tool set across all of the IBV,” said Ballou. “It has facilitated our data discovery process for the development of white papers that support IBM Business Consulting around the world.”

Results

- Analyze and disseminate results from large-scale multi-response surveys in less time
- Empower core teams to access research data and conduct basic analysis on their own
- Easily create cross-tabs and charts from the data
- Rapid implementation, enabling more than 25 analysts to be up and running quickly

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