

**Experian Consumer Direct (ECD) is the leader in the online consumer credit industry dedicated to providing consumers with immediate access to their credit information. Recently public with expectations of high growth over the next 5 years, ECD's finance organization looked to CBH and Cognos to provide a platform which would allow them to streamline their planning and forecasting processes and better support their projected growth.**

**D**elivering more than 500,000 credit reports monthly to US consumers, ECD has built one of the largest financial services-related partner programs offering consumers immediate access to a full suite of credit products including credit monitoring, identity theft prevention products, fraud resolution services and information protection products. With the prospect of increasing their revenues annually by 15-20% for the next five to six years, ECD's finance organization was feeling the pressure and knew they had to streamline the planning and forecasting processes as well as integrate operational information with finance to support the anticipated growth. These requirements combined with the fluid nature of today's financial markets and the need to be able to respond to the rapid changes with agility, left Experian looking for a solution to meet the need now and well into the future. "We were definitely feeling constrained. With increased reporting requirements and several new projects on the horizon, we needed to take the next step and invest in some tools to make us more efficient," explained Experian's Sr. Director of Finance. After selecting the right technology tool, ECD turned to CBH to help them design and implement the financial platform that could not only automate their current processes, but also allow them to proactively plan for and more effectively execute their growth strategy.

Having worked with CBH, Experian knew that they could count on CBH to deliver what ECD needed. "CBH has a proven track record. We have a lot of respect for them and value their opinion," said Experian's Sr. Finance Director. "They have tremendous knowledge of Cognos products and are honest about what can be achieved. They really collaborated with us to create a solution tailored to our specific needs and that reflect our way of doing business."

#### **CREATING A SINGLE INTEGRATED PLATFORM**

Instead of operating on a process dependent upon hundreds and hundreds of excel spreadsheets, Experian today benefits from a single platform from which to perform all forecasting, budgeting, planning and analysis. To accomplish this, CBH built them a series of financial models to mirror the complexities of their business integrating information from human resources/payroll, operations and finance. "It's a huge advantage to have your source of record all in one place," says Experian. With consolidated information, Experian can now access real-time data instantly and have a more complete and current view of their business.



## STREAMLINING THE PROCESS

Thanks to the new system, ECD can now boast a much more efficient, reliable and repeatable planning and forecasting process. No more managing and sorting through multiple spreadsheet and manual consolidations. Today, cost center manager input their forecast numbers directly into the system which instantly rolls them up, routes them for approvals, processes them and re-distributes the results back down automatically. These capabilities are critical as increasing projects at Experian involve off-site facilities and the web-based nature of the Cognos system enables integration and collaboration with these remote sites seamlessly. Built-in audit trail and multiple version controls keep track of all edits, making sure that everyone is working with the most current and accurate set of data. And with CBH's help in configuring workflow capabilities, they are able to incorporate standards and best practices within their process to ensure consistency enterprise-wide. As a result, Experian has been able to gain more control over their data and reduce risks of errors in addition to dramatic improvements in cycle times in areas such as payroll preparation, budgeting, variance reporting and month end processes.

## MEETING MORE COMPLEX DEMANDS

Experian is also better equipped to support its organizations growth. "As you get bigger, the questions and requests go up exponentially. We just went public a couple months ago and have many more requirements to fulfill, more reports to produce," says Experian's Sr Finance Director. "CBH really helped us to take advantage of the powerful features within Cognos to extend our ability to meet the new requirements and demands of being a public company." For example, CBH provided Experian with more flexibility in the forecasting area by designing the model with the ability to extrapolate out multiple years and deliver rolling forecasts over an 18 month period on any given week. The model also allows Experian to recalculate the forecast with actuals giving them the ability to

analyze trends and extrapolate the results to future months. These and other capabilities enable Experian to respond more quickly to requests and better service the informational needs of executives internally, as well as their analysts and investor communities.

## BEING MORE PROACTIVE, PREDICTIVE

One of the capabilities Experian is most excited about is the ability to do more predictive analysis using driver-based modeling to do "what-if" and "break back" scenarios. For example, executive can run scenarios to see how forecasted orders would drive call volume which in turn allows them to proactively staff call centers for higher activity while optimizing resources to maximize profitability. This allows them to manage more proactively and adjust quickly to market changes. "It's powerful, we can better understand our business drivers and look at trends that could possibly pose a problem," says Experian's Sr. Finance Director. "We now have the information that allows us to improve strategic planning, be less reactionary, know the P&L impact of projects and take control of the factors that affect profitability."

## DOING MORE WITH LESS

These days, the Experian finance team is a force to be reckoned with. The increased efficiencies have allowed them take on additional projects with ease and fulfill the increased requirements without significantly impacting the day-to-day. Most significantly, they have been able to dedicate a quarter of their existing staff to more strategic activities without adding headcount. They can be more forward thinking and really take advantage of the sophisticated business intelligence capabilities to do the predictive analysis. "What it really does is makes you a business partner and performance driver instead of just an accounting team posting results," says Experian. "Thanks to CBH and Cognos, we now have the financial backbone that can support our anticipated growth and provide us with a competitive advantage by allowing us to respond quickly to our competitors and partners."



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