

*See How Fast Your Business Can Run.*



### Company Profile

Leading company in surface care products for autos, boats, RVs and aircraft

### Situation

- Response time too slow for rapidly changing business conditions.
- Executives need to see and understand up-to-date information for quick decision making.
- Company needed easier, faster way to distribute information.
- Different executive users required different sets of relevant information.
- Executives were dependent on IT and others for information and reports.

### Solution

Customized graphical dashboard display of relevant performance measurements

### Software/ Used

- Microsoft Internet Information Server with SQL Server
- OLAP Hub
- Data drawn from ERP system, and spreadsheets
- Custom Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG) programmed in XML

### Benefits

- Access to timely information in user friendly form for quicker response
- Executives see performance measurements without irrelevant clutter
- Drill down to details for decision support
- Reduced reliance on IT
- Dashboard easily extended to new users

## Performance dashboard puts Meguiar's executives in the fast lane to better decision making.

Meguiar's high-performance polishes, waxes and surface care products have a passionately loyal following among owners of fine automobiles, boats, RVs and aircraft, who are known as raving fans. As the premier surface care company, Meguiar's also takes an innovative approach to corporate performance measurement that helps them stay ahead of the competition. Today, Meguiar's executives can literally see and measure that performance, so they can take action immediately in response to fast-changing business conditions.

### Needed: Timely Information, Ready for Executives

Speed counts. It's essential for Meguiar's executives to have access to up-to-date, relevant financial information in a form they can immediately understand and use in decision making. "We've been looking for an easier way to distribute financial data to executives instead of mining through the green screens," says Meguiar's VP/CFO Jerome Kaiser. Often, the information still had to be further formatted to eliminate irrelevant clutter and make it easy to understand. There had to be better way.

"What drove us was the difficulty of finding and summarizing data at an executive level," Kaiser says "We were looking at Executive Management Information Systems for a solution, and saw a number of graphical products. But most of them were just upholstered spreadsheets that displayed too much information, much of it not relevant."

### Problems:

There was no easy way for executives to quickly see and understand the ever-changing status of the business. They were dependent on others to find information and generate answers about key performance indicators. Different executives needed to focus on different information without irrelevant clutter.

Response time was too slow to keep pace with rapidly changing business conditions. Available information was not timely and it took too long to prepare it for use by executives, further delaying decision making. Meguiar's IT staff felt it needed specialized expertise to develop a graphical solution tailored to the company's unique requirements.

### The Solution: CBH Performance Dashboard

There had been discussions at Meguiar's about the concept of using a graphical display to summarize financial and operational information. Joel Banez, head of Meguiar's Technology Delivered Solutions Group, first suggested a graphical solution when Microsoft started marketing its digital network solution several years ago. He envisioned it as gauges. Kaiser suggested a dashboard-style cluster of gauges that could be custom tailored to each executive. They combined their ideas, and started looking for a source to make it a reality.

"You should have fun with the discovery process of finding the right solution," says Kaiser. "A spreadsheet with 1,000 bits of information is not user friendly, even if it is summarized." While attending a CBH seminar, Banez and Kaiser had a chance to discuss their concept and requirements with CBH's Chief Software Architect Myron Weber, who had some ideas of his own. He

wanted to apply new developments in graphic technology to produce a unique digital display of critical performance indicators. “We only had a small piece of the idea,” says Banez. “Myron came up with the other critical pieces.”



Inspired by Meguiar’s close association with high-performance automobiles, the display was modeled after a sports car instrument panel. An executive can see at a glance what the company is doing, while it is happening—in a display as easily understood as a speedometer or fuel gauge. Custom options permit the dashboard to show a variety of “gauges” for the company’s key performance indicators (KPIs.) Each user can focus on his or her own areas of concern without irrelevant clutter or confusing information overload. The dashboard even has an audible roar of an engine starting when it is invoked.

KPIs were organized into a few basic categories. One set relates to cash, including outstanding checks, line of credit borrowings, investments and cash on hand. Several indicators relate to sales and orders, showing year-to-date and month-to-date, open orders, cancelled orders, units in cases, etc. The gauges are customized for each executive. For example, Kaiser, as CFO, tracks the company’s borrowings, debt position,

investments, cash balance and other information that would not be as relevant to, say, a marketing executive. Some gauges appear on almost everyone’s dashboard, because they report on company-wide performance measurements, such as Profitability, and Sales vs. Plan, by month and year-to-date.

#### Under the Hood:

The multi-dimensional data for the performance dashboard is stored in Microsoft SQL Server. OLAP Hub provides access to cubes and reports. When an executive wants to see what’s behind a value displayed on a gauge, simply clicking on it drills down to the underlying data cube for details and analysis, or to generate a report. The original data used in the solution comes from a custom-developed ERP system and spreadsheets maintained by financial staff members.

The exciting dashboard graphics are programmed in XML using Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG), which allows users to zoom in and out with no loss of resolution or clarity. The dashboard also automatically resizes itself for a user’s browser window.

Best of all, CBH designed the solution with the goal of transferring the knowledge to Meguiar’s IT staff, so they could extend and maintain the solution themselves. No special graphic skills are required. The SVG and Java scripts are re-usable. The graphical interface runs on Microsoft Internet Information Server using SQL Server for the database, but any ODBC would do the job.

#### Benefits:

According to Jerome Kaiser, the performance dashboard “...has had a direct impact on our business. Before the dashboard, we ran the risk of making an uninformed decision, and possibly it would be the wrong one. Now, by having access to current, meaningful data, we can react in a more timely manner and more intelligently.”

- Executives now have up-to-date

information in a form they can readily understand.

- Information is updated every hour, not once a month.
- Users see exactly the key performance indicators they need with no irrelevant clutter.
- Drill-down provides details to support analysis and decisionmaking.
- Executives are now self-sufficient, not dependent on IT and others for finding information and answers.
- Executives feel comfortable using the performance dashboard.
- The system can be easily extended to new users as needed.
- IT manpower no longer needed to find data and prepare executive reports is now free for other work.
- It’s cool.

Meguiar’s has plans to roll out the CBH performance dashboard to more of its executives and senior managers with additional custom Key Performance Indicators. “We’re talking to the VP of Strategic Planning,” says Kaiser. “He’s interested in information concerning market share and customer retention. His indicators measure customer feedback, positive vs. negative comments, phone calls, hits at the web site.”

What’s next? Communications? R&D? Marketing? There’s plenty of room in the fast lane. These days, there’s plenty of room in the fast lane at Meguiar’s.

#### About CBH Consultants:

**CBH delivers business solutions that give companies the power to make critical business decisions faster, with greater confidence, at every level. We design cost-effective solutions for measuring business performance, planning, reporting and analysis, financial and project accounting, and distribution. Today, more than 300 companies throughout the West are running faster, smarter and more effectively with our help.**

