

# BRAYTON INTERNATIONAL



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**“COMPANIES THAT CAN’T SUPPORT THEIR BUSINESS STRATEGY WITH WELL-MANAGED INFORMATION ARE DEAD IN THE WATER. COGNOS, MICROSOFT AND SYMIX HAVE HELPED ENSURE THAT BRAYTON WILL BE SWIMMING FOR A LONG TIME TO COME.”**

—JOSEPH ERBA, PRESIDENT AND CEO, BRAYTON INTERNATIONAL

Brayton International is an award-winning manufacturer of high-end contract furniture. Operating from a 195,000 square-foot, three-site manufacturing campus in High Point, North Carolina, the company’s 450 employees produce lounge and office furniture, wood side and occasional tables, and executive and healthcare seating products that are sold through an international dealer network. Brayton’s future plans include a new 250,000 square-foot building that will bring its three separate facilities under one roof.

## THE CHALLENGE

- Replace outdated mainframe system
- Collect and report on integrated corporate data in a secure fashion
- Harness technology to improve relationships with dealers

Brayton once used a mainframe-based legacy system that provided basic data for employees within particular business units. But it only offered about two levels of information, and its structure made it difficult for staff to collect or retrieve other sorts of data about variances, the efficiency of Brayton’s factories, and the company’s burden absorption.

Brayton realized that to maintain and expand its leadership position, the company must gain a firm understanding of its business data. The requirements

were clear: the company had to find a way to centralize all the data flowing from its various business units, and it needed tools that would allow managers and executives to access and understand that data so they could make well-informed business decisions. “Traditionally, the furniture industry hasn’t been at the forefront of information management,” says Joseph Erba, Brayton’s President and CEO. “We wanted to break out of that mould by using proven data warehousing technologies that would serve us well into the 21st century.”

## THE SOLUTION

- Deploy Symix’s® SyteLine ERP
- Integrate with Cognos Business Intelligence and Microsoft® SQL Server™
- Build OLAP Services data marts

To centralize its business data, Brayton chose SyteLine, an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) application from Symix Systems, Inc. SyteLine provided additional levels of information from each business unit and brought it together to reveal how each unit’s operations affected the others. Such insights were impossible to get with the old legacy system. The integrated information soon revealed areas of needed improvement to Brayton’s business processes, and the company moved quickly to address them.

Next, Brayton began looking for a front-end solution that would allow its managers, executives, salespeople, and other knowledge workers to access, analyze, and distribute the SyteLine data. The solution had to be fast, powerful enough to handle the considerable data volumes, and, to preserve data integrity, able to operate outside the firewall.

Brayton found what they wanted in a data warehouse co-developed by Symix and Cognos. The Microsoft-based solution would allow knowledge workers to use Cognos Business Intelligence applications to analyze and report on SyteLine transactional data stored in Microsoft SQL Server and in OLAP Services, a component of the server that builds data marts or “cubes”—sets of data organized along business dimensions such as time, customer, and location.

“We could see the advantage of using Cognos PowerPlay® against OLAP Services cubes and running reports with Cognos Impromptu,” says Markus Hill, Brayton’s Manager of Information Technology. “This would increase the flexibility and value of our overall SQL investment.”

“The solution gave us everything we wanted, right out of the box,” says Mr. Erba. “We were able to extract data from our sales and marketing data cubes and transform it into information about where our products are selling, who’s buying them, and whether we’re focussing our energies on the appropriate parts of the business.” Moreover, adds Mr. Erba, because the solution was custom-designed for a Symix system, “security wasn’t even an issue.”

“Installation of the solution was made simpler by the close integration between Microsoft SQL and the entire Cognos suite of products,” adds Mr. Hill. “Everything worked and worked together.”

## **BUSINESS BENEFITS**

- Fast, accurate sales and marketing reports
- Unanticipated and valuable product development information
- Solid foundation for Web-based data access for dealers and customers

Today, the speed at which Brayton staff generate reports has resulted in dramatic increases in efficiency. For example, year-to-date bookings reports used by sales representatives previously took two to four hours to generate. Cognos can create these same reports in under two minutes. As well, the sales team can provide customers with complete information about sales, discounts, product mixes, and so on in the space of a brief phone call to Brayton customer service.

“This gives our salespeople a real competitive advantage,” says Mr. Erba. “Our dealers appreciate getting information quickly, and this is something other furniture makers can’t always provide.”

The new Microsoft-Cognos solution has been a boon for Brayton’s product developers and marketing executives, who can now pinpoint where products are selling. This allows them to formulate creative product and price combinations that may prove successful in markets that, using the legacy system, might have remained untapped.

Right now, Brayton’s system is for internal use only. But the long-term goal is to expand it using an extranet, then the Internet, so that dealers and customers can access information about their accounts and Brayton products over the Web. Internally, Brayton also intends to add new data marts to accelerate tasks such as the monthly closing process, vendor reporting and assessment, and customer payments.

“These days, companies that can’t support their business strategy with well-managed information are dead in the water,” says Mr. Erba. “Cognos, Microsoft, and Symix have helped ensure that Brayton will be swimming for a long time to come.”

*Microsoft SQL Server 7.0 OLAP Services is a previous version of Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Analysis Services.*



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