STAR: Stewardship, Transparency, Accountability, and Reporting

Using Cognos Dashboards to Facilitate Decision Making

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UC San Diego Foundation Accounting, Fund Stewardship, Administrative Computing and Telecommunications, collaborated to create STAR, a one stop shop where Principal Investigators, fund managers, division heads and advancement staff can view a complete picture of their funds.

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Summary
UC San Diego’s STAR – Stewardship, Transparency, Accountability and Reporting Cognos dashboard supports over 2,200 campus fund managers, support staff, development officers and advancement staff. Designed by Advancement Services for business users, STAR uses Cognos technology to deliver state-of-the-art financial dashboards with consolidated and dynamic views of money available to fund stewards.

Project Description
Overall
In 2012, work began on Engagement Stewardship Philanthropy, a project that converted our advancement constituent tracking database from Sage’s Millennium to Blackbaud’s customer relationship management (CRM) product. During this project, the team realized that the existing homegrown FundRaisER application, which allowed Fund Managers to view their Foundation fund balances, had not evolved with the business. It was decided to develop a new system. The end result is STAR, a single application which incorporates data from five different data stores for effective management of fund balances and other pertinent information regarding gift funds. Designed to interface with other systems, STAR is integrated into the new ESP Blackbaud CRM, giving campus fund holders and advancement staff one stop to acquire data that was previously accessed using five separate databases.

STAR functionality includes:
- Default fund lists for Principal Investigators (PIs) and Business Officers (BOs) assigned to funds
- Advanced search capabilities for funds. Users are able to query by departments, fund types, fund-use, etc.
- The ability to save fund lists
- Drill through capabilities that allow an overall picture of funds with access to various ledgers and fund reports.
- A single picture of a fund that brings together data from multiple data sources
- A visual, dashboard layout with detailed charts and graphs.
- Term Definitions built into the dashboard clarify what each field is
- Access to Gift Documents and Annual Reports for the fund
- Access to Linked funds
- Access to detail reports of donors to a fund.
- Security groups for Advancement Staff, Financial Users and PI/BOs
- Automated Daily updates for Expendable balances
- Automated Day after updates for Market and Book Values

Fund managers have found the new features, integrated functionality, and visibility of secure and auditable transactions have already saved them time and money.

STAR Dashboard using Cognos
The dashboard design is one of the most compelling STAR features
The STAR project gave fund managers, principal investigators, and advancement staff a Business Intelligence dashboard comprised of visual charts, graphs, and drill through reports with responsive parameters. Knowing that staff have different requirements and ways of working, users can easily tailor their dashboard to their needs. Users can access high-level views of funds and use drill through capabilities to retrieve fund details as needed. In addition, users can easily store and access different fund queries as dashboard views.

When the project started, UC San Diego did not have the technology to produce complex dashboards. A product comparison and proof of concept was conducted and in 2012 IBM Cognos was approved and purchased.

Project members from Advancement Services (Foundation Accounting and Fund Stewardship) developed a visual storyboard that detailed the dashboard look and feel as well as navigation practices to reach sub reports. ACT’s Data Warehouse team created a data warehouse which integrates data from many and varied data sources. With the storyboard and new data warehouse in place, the ACT Cognos team developed the STAR dashboard. The saved query feature, which is not a Cognos functionality, is coded in Java and integrated into the Cognos dashboards.
Technologies Used:

UCSD Data Warehouse
- Informatica v9.5.1 - Extract, Transform, Load to move data from source systems to the Data Warehouse
- MS SQL Server 2012 Custom Views and Stored Procedures to retrieve data from the CRM Database
- IBM DB2 UDB v9.7.4 housing the UCSD Data Warehouse
- Dimensional Star schema Data Warehouse to allow for historical reporting
- Integrated Data Warehouse data store pulling data from
  - Blackbaud CRM / ESP Advancement database
  - Blackbaud Financial Edge GL Accounting database
  - UCOP Fundriver data for Regents Market Value, Book Value
  - UCSD Financial databases for Regents Expendable balances
  - Foundation Fund Market Value Spreadsheet

Dashboards and Reports:
- IBM Cognos v10.2
  - Framework Manager
  - Report Studio

Tailored Interface:
- Security Roles define what pieces of the interface are available to each user.

Saved Fund Lists:
- JavaScript was integrated with Cognos to allow clients to save lists of funds.
- IBM DB2 UDB Stored Procedures to write and retrieve the saved lists from the database

Timeframe
STAR was made available to campus on April 1, 2015.
During the first month of deployment, the average number of STAR reports that were run was 1025 reports per week. A total of 139 distinct clients used the system. As we continue to deploy STAR to other departments, we expect these numbers to continue growing.
Success Factors
The following summarizes the key success criteria we set forth at the outset of the project:

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<th>Success Factor</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ease of use</td>
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<td>Visual Dashboard Interface</td>
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<td>Integrated Data from multiple data sources</td>
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<td>Integrated Foundation and Regents fund balances</td>
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<td>Increased customer satisfaction</td>
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Predicted Cost Savings
Overall, STAR will result in an annual cost savings of $1.7M by presenting a complete picture of fund balances and freeing up administrative resources. A significant portion of these cost savings are achieved through the efficiency of the dashboard component. Additionally, donors will be satisfied that the money they donate is actually being put to good use.

Customer Satisfaction Responses

“STAR has streamlined the process for creating reports for fund holders and development officers. It has served as a vital tool for my job and has allowed me to check the history of funds I report on at a fraction of the time that it took with the previous systems.”

- Jason Morpeth, Analyst, Advancement Services

“STAR has been extremely helpful with managing all of our funds. It’s so great that we now have the complete picture for our funds all in one spot, and we no longer have to go through so many different sources to request reports and gather data. STAR has made our department far more efficient by providing us with a streamlined process to put together fund reports and to gather information for research.”

- Becky Obayashi – Undergraduate Scholarships

“Just had a quick look, but the STAR Dashboard Reporting tool is impressive! The many filtering options in the Advanced Search are great - for me, the most used will be the Department filter. Was able to get 1 report showing all funds for the Aquarium in seconds! The results are very comprehensive - including the IFIS accounting information is a real plus - being able to see the “whole picture” in one report will streamline manual reporting. Having both a Summary and Detail report option is very nice, as is the ability to download when needed.”

- Terry Varnell, Programmer Analyst, SIO

References
- Blink: http://foundation.ucsd.edu/accounting/star.html