REALTECH Ltd
P O Box 8300 ■ Symonds Street ■ Auckland 1150
P: +64 9 308 0900 ■ F: +64 9 308 0909
info@realtech.co.nz ■ www.realtech.co.nz

SAP HANA® provides faster analytics at Briscoe Group - REALTECH provides "no surprises" implementation

At a Glance

The Challenges

- Ever-expanding data warehouse caused I/O bottlenecks
- Growing user base and more complex analytics severely taxed processing capabilities
- Reports took too long to run - analysts would leave out key metrics to speed up results
- Risk mitigation – it was essential to avoid any disruption to operations or infrastructure

The Solution

- SAP HANA® database
- SAP® Business Warehouse application 7.4 enhancement pack 1
- SAP ERP application 6.0
- SAP Process Integration technology 7.0
- SAP Solution Manager application management solution 7.1
- SAP Enterprise Portal component 7.4
- Professional services from REALTECH

The Benefits

- Transparent upgrade - no disruptions to operations or processing
- Significantly faster reporting - both standard and ad hoc
- No cost over-runs or delays due to careful planning
- Solid foundation for further enhancements and faster processing

There were no surprises during the migration to the SAP HANA® database at Briscoe Group. "The team at REALTECH knew exactly what to do," says Jeffrey Westcott, IT Manager at Briscoe Group. "This was a major initiative for us, and we were a bit nervous about the process. But REALTECH prepared a comprehensive strategic plan that specified the required resources, estimated person-hours and anticipated results. And when we went live, SAP HANA performed as promised. That's what we like - no surprises."

Wanted: Faster reporting, less waiting

Briscoe Group, which owns and operates 80 Briscoes Homeware, Rebel Sports and Living and Giving retail outlets throughout New Zealand, wanted to speed up reporting processes and had been planning for a major upgrade when the timing was right. But only recently, with the maturation of SAP HANA, did they decide to take action.

"We knew we needed faster reporting and more powerful analytics," explains Westcott. "People don't like to wait. Even a 30-second delay in report generation is enough to prevent people from using the tool. We value our data…we load every data element into our data warehouse to support finance, stock control, forward planning, merchandising and promotions decision-making. So every day, our database expands. Plus, analysts are performing more complex operations, and

we are continually adding more staff who rely on SAP software for their day-to-day tasks.

"When we started to get serious about the upgrade," continues Westcott, "we looked at a number of solutions. We liked the in-memory architecture of SAP HANA but, at the time, it was still a relatively new solution. That changed as the technology matured and SAP HANA became more mainstream. We spoke to other organisations that had successfully implemented SAP HANA and decided it was time to move forward."

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- Jeffrey Westcott, IT Manager, Briscoe Group

REALTECH: Partner of choice

REALTECH and Briscoe Group have had a long and successful relationship. "REALTECH has been providing technical support for SAP solutions since 2007," says Westcott, "and has provided routine maintenance and patching services as well. In addition, the REALTECH team has helped with the implementation of our SAP solutions SAP Business Warehouse, SAP Process Integration and SAP Enterprise Portal. And they had helped other companies implement SAP HANA. We especially like the fact that when REALTECH commits to a project, they do it right the first time and on time. So when we made the decision to implement SAP HANA, there was really no discussion. REALTECH was our preferred partner.

"A number of issues related to the implementation of SAP HANA had to be addressed," continues Westcott. "For instance, SAP HANA runs on a 'black box' appliance which is pre-configured with the CPU and memory at the factory. We had to make accurate predictions on how much capacity we would need, not just for the present but for the future as well. In addition, we had to allow for both compressed and uncompressed data. REALTECH helped us identify the key metrics so we could specify the most appropriate configuration."

Experience pays dividends

REALTECH's hands-on experience with SAP HANA facilitated the implementation process. "This is a fast-moving technology," notes Westcott. When the box was delivered, it was configured correctly in respect to OS, CPU and RAM. But the team at REALTECH had to get inside and update the software. They had anticipated issues such as this, however, so there was no slippage in the delivery schedule. Indeed, REALTECH's initial strategic plan, including estimated hours, turned out to be quite accurate."

With SAP HANA, forward planning is essential. "There are a lot of inter-related variables that have to be accounted for," says Andrew Spicer, Managing Director of REALTECH. "We carefully mapped out each step and calculated exactly what resources would be required. We added enough flexibility into the project so that when any additional tasks popped up - such as updating the pre-loaded version of SAP HANA - we could take care of it without any drama."

Immediate benefits

The impact was immediate. "On the Monday after going live with SAP HANA, many of our reports ran significantly faster," says Westcott. "In the first instance, we opted for the limited runtime edition of SAP HANA to reduce our risk. Now that we've seen the results, we are going to continue with Phase Two and streamline the entire process with faster throughput into the data warehouse. Not only will all of our reports be generated much faster, but we'll be able to perform our ad hoc analyses in near real time."

About Briscoe Group

Briscoe Group owns and operates 80 Briscoes Homeware, Rebel Sports and Living and Giving retail outlets throughout New Zealand. As well as bricks and mortar stores in all New Zealand cities and most major provincial towns, the Group sells its products online through its websites. The three brand names generated sales revenue in the Group's latest financial year in excess of $452 million. Approximately 1,800 people are employed by the Group.

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