

Chick-fil-A Increases Productivity Using Corda's Data Presentation Solutions in their Restaurant Scorecard

As Chick-fil-A's slogan says, "We Didn't Invent The Chicken, Just The Chicken Sandwich®." CORDA Technologies feels the same way about corporate data; it didn't invent data, just the best ways to present data.

Background:

With about 1,200 restaurants in 38 states, Chick-fil-A recently reported 2004 system-wide sales of more than \$1.74 billion, sustaining its 37-year streak of consecutive sales gains. Excellence and improvement have been words to live by, in fact Atlanta-based Chick-fil-A was recently honored with the Best Drive-Thru in America award for the third year in a row. How did they do it? By focusing on who and what works well, and consistently providing the resources their key people need to play to their strengths and improve.

Talented staff, visionary executives and properly implemented technology have all played a key role in the success of the company.

Challenge:

At Chick-fil-A, the home office acts as a services firm for the 1,200 individual restaurants and their Operators. The restaurant Operators are busy people; their time is extremely valuable because they are constantly being pulled in every direction in the store. When they have the opportunity to sit down at their computers, they log on to the Chick-fil-A Intranet to obtain the information that is relevant to them. The chain needed a way to grab their attention and present the information in a very easy, understandable way. They also needed to add a dynamic component to some of the information for real-time delivery.

Solution:

Chick-fil-A's relationship with Corda Technologies began a few years ago when Chris Taylor, Senior Manager of Technical Architecture and Operations, purchased PopChart®, a charting and graphing software to create an application called the Drive-Thru Performance Report.

The Drive-Thru Performance Report lets the individual restaurant Operators see how their peak hour of drive through sales performance compares with the rest of the chain or other stores in their same segment over the previous five days. The report allows Operators to track and measure traffic count, average transaction size and so on.

"The Drive-Thru Performance Report was the capstone of a larger effort," Taylor said. "Reporting on this type of data in this format was new to us. We had to devise a way to collect, condition and display the data. We use a custom java code to extract the data appropriately and pull the data out of our data warehouse. Corda's PopChart was a great delivery mechanism. It has strong capabilities and performs well at displaying the data graphically and interactively, which makes it easier to understand and use."

Data visualization and presentation at Chick-fil-A has seen a remarkable evolution and Corda has been an integral part in providing the tools to turn data into actionable information.

The company has also implemented an innovative restaurant-level scorecard, which is evidence of a departure from their historic methods of reporting metrics.

The scorecards are generated dynamically and populated with information pulled from data warehouses. Chick-fil-A uses PopChart to graphically display the five main success factors including, Vision, People, Financial Return, Sales and Brand Growth, and Quality and Customer Satisfaction on the scorecard.

"We have literally dozens of additional metrics that flood into the scorecard that culminate in the five success factors," Taylor said. "The Operator of the restaurant can view the scorecard and instantly understand how they are doing according to the five factors. We do this by using trend lines, and coloring such as green, yellow and red for individual metric items that communicate quickly where the problems and success areas are."

The Operators set the benchmarks or goals, such as; "I want my sales to increase 15% this year." If they go in and change that number, the scorecard is instantly updated. It relies on the dynamic nature of Corda's underlying technology to display the information. Additionally, the scorecard has a customized background on it with the chain's corporate branded scorecard imagery, which is a five-piece puzzle that represents the success factors. Each piece has different measurements that show whether they are on, above or below target.

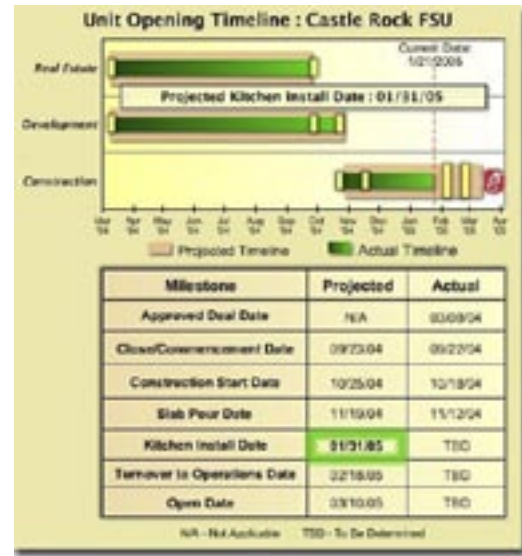
Taylor's team also uses PopChart to communicate with its restaurant Operators regarding the progress of new stores that are under construction (see example at right). This is called the "Under Development Timeline Chart." It shows



the construction progress for stores because current Operators are interested in other Chick-fil-A stores opening up around them.

Chick-fil-A has also benefited greatly from another Corda solution, Highwire™, a unique server-based HTML to PDF conversion solution. Highwire converts Web pages into PDF's so people can print, save and share pages without the worry of losing any of the information that is being displayed on the Web.

"Highwire has been invaluable; we were very excited about it the first time we saw it because we recognized the value we could gain by being able to convert Web pages into printable PDF documents," Taylor said. "People all over our organization benefit from Highwire from the application developers to the analysts to the store Operators. The trouble was that it was difficult to get Web-based reports to look right when printed because HTML doesn't print well. Now, people don't really have to think about it, if they can get something to show on the screen, if they pass it through Highwire it comes back as a PDF, which is what we want."



"I can't even list all the places where we use Highwire. Highwire has become a standard part of our corporate environment, and one we have become very accustomed to," Taylor said.

Wayne Salter, a Chick-fil-A Integration Services Senior Analyst, said, "We have seen a large use for Highwire. There are usually a small number of computers in the stores, which are frequently shared with the managers who are doing labor scheduling, payroll, etc. So, the idea of being able to quickly print off reports is very important, especially since there are plenty of people at a store who don't use the computer at all, and the reports need to be accessible to them as well. With Highwire, they can print off the reports and put them up on a bulletin board to share with their team members.

Additionally, Salter said Highwire has been a very quick and easy solution to printing only the sections of a Web page the Operators want to print because extraneous links and banners waste ink and paper. Also they are able to reproduce a Web page with enhanced features such as the replication of headers on each page to make better sense of a table that runs over several successive pages. Features such as these have proven to be a great step as the corporate home office seeks to improve communication with the Operators.

What's Next?

The Chick-fil-A Technical Architecture and Operations team includes the Networking group. Over the past year they have been rolling out persistent connections to all of their stores that were previously dial up connections.

Salter said the next project on that front would include Corda's OptiMap™, which is a software solution that ties data into interactive maps.

"We are building out a huge Wide Area Network that needs a lot of monitoring. We have decided to make it intelligent and to have the nodes at the individual stores report on their status. The next step is to plug this live data into Opti-Map and display the information in a map of the US with points for all our stores. This will allow us to quickly identify problems; for instance, if a store is not connected, it will show a red light or if an entire region is down we will be able to identify it quickly and take the necessary actions to fix the problem," Salter said.

They are planning to put the map generated with OptiMap on a wall monitor in the main operation office so people can see the live data displayed geographically. This will always be visible to help ensure they take care of their people right away.

Conclusion:

In recent years, Chick-fil-A has taken several steps to both improve communications between the home office and store Operators, and to empower those store Operators with the data they need to take their restaurants to the next level. Corda Technologies software products have been the optimal data visualization and presentation solution to help them achieve their goals.