

Autobell Finds “Cleaner” Approach To Business Reporting

Customer:
Autobell Car Wash

Headquarters:
Charlotte, NC

ERP Solution:
MAS 200

Locations:
55 facilities in
N. Carolina, Georgia
S. Carolina and
Virginia

Organization Size:
1,700 Full and Part-
Time Employees

Background:
Nation’s third
largest privately-
held, conveyor-
operated car
washing business.
Washed over 30
million since 1969.

Business Problems:

- Extensive effort to produce financial package
- Difficulty getting data into desired Excel format
- Aligning calendars for consolidated reporting
- Accuracy concerns due to manual effort

Some Cleaning Up to Do

When Tim Early took over the reins as the controller for Autobell Car Wash, Inc., the nation’s third largest privately-held, conveyor-operated car washing business, reporting on the company’s financials was a messy job. “When I first joined Autobell, it took quite a bit of effort to get our financial reporting package pulled together and to close our books,” mentions Mr. Early. “Sometimes, it took us several months before we could close out a period.”



This prompted Early to focus on streamlining the closing cycle, while working tirelessly on a new reporting package to help company management review the financial health of the business. “We reduced our closing cycle significantly, where we now close by the 15th of the month. I also developed a capability to pull data from our Sage MAS 200 ERP system and move it into Excel. Then, I put the numbers into a format that I could work with, so that I could get the financial package out in a timely manner.”

Not Everything Was Shiny

Soon thereafter, another problem loomed for Mr. Early and Autobell. “We were in the process of upgrading to a newer version of MAS 200,” comments Early, who notes that while taking advantage of new functionality in the updated release, one of the changes the new version brought was a switch in reporting capabilities. “Instead of allowing information to be easily imported into Excel, data was in a format for Crystal Reports.”

“All of the sudden, I had to do a lot of work to get data into the Excel templates that I had developed,” continues Early. “For example, we publish a rolling monthly trend report that shows us major changes in the business or data problems. When I started

working with the new reporting format, I had to do quite a bit of manual work to get data into the format I needed for the templates I had created.”

Early also had issues with a key consolidation report that needed to be produced, where two different companies owned by Autobell had different fiscal calendars. “Aligning the calendars between the two companies was a real challenge.”

As time wore on, Early found that he was spending increasingly more time in moving data and minimal time analyzing Autobell’s financial picture. “While the management team was very excited to see the new reporting package, I was spending more and more time getting the information pulled together. Besides importing general ledger data, I was also provided a lot of individual store information. Because there was so much manual work involved, I was continually concerned with accuracy. Anytime you have people involved in manually getting information into Excel, errors will happen. That meant I needed to review the reporting package closely and make sure that everything tied off correctly before sending it out.”

Time for a New, Cleaner Formula

As concern for the timeliness and accuracy of reporting grew, Early knew it was to make a change. During a consultation with his Sage MAS 200 reseller, CompuData, he mentioned his plight. “I told them about the challenges and frustrations I was facing. I had looked at other reporting alternatives, but they all seemed to involve the ongoing need to import data and manual effort. Plus, they required quite a bit of training to learn how to build and publish reports.”

“When I mentioned to CompuData about my work in Excel,” continues Early, “they asked me if I had ever heard of BizInsight. They thought because BizInsight uses Excel to design and publish reports as well as to analyze data that it might be a great solution for us.”

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Controller, Autobell Car Wash, Inc.

Solution:

BizInsight from
BizNet Software

Results:

- Cut report development time by 80%
- Improved report package creation time from 2-3 days to minutes
- Increased time to develop other reports, including reporting beyond the GL
- Expanded ability to make adjustments within the same period

"I was intrigued," indicates Early. "Once I saw BizInsight, I immediately knew it would take care of our concerns and issues." CompuData also shared some welcomed news with Early, indicating that BizNet Software was designing a method to access data directly from MAS 200 on a real-time basis. That capability meant Early wouldn't need to go through the laborious step of constantly importing data into Excel.

Simplicity and Power

With BizInsight implemented, Mr. Early was able to simply create the reports he wanted. "I was able to bring in data in the format I needed directly into Excel. Creating the reports was very straight-

"...I can build a report using BizInsight faster than I can download the data from MAS 200 into Excel!"

forward, including my consolidation report. But, I didn't really realize all of the power BizInsight has to offer. There's a lot of capability that becomes apparent as you use it, like the ability to drill down on data through the automatic generation of pivot tables. That's been a huge benefit."

Another benefit that Early points to is the intuitive way BizInsight helps him develop reports. "It's very easy to learn. If you know Excel well enough, all you really need to understand is how to bring in the period information from MAS 200. Changing things in a report, like which companies to run a report against or what period to use is extremely simple. I plan to use it for all of the reporting I can. I can build a report using BizInsight faster than I can download the data from MAS 200 into Excel!"

A Streamlined Operation

Now that he has created his financial reporting package with BizInsight, producing the monthly financial reporting package is as streamlined as the company's car washing facilities. "Where it used to take me two to three days to get a report package built and generated, now it's practically an automated task. All I have to do is change a few parameters and with a click, I have the package produced with updated numbers. I would say that BizInsight has reduced my time on report development by at least 80%. Now, I can focus on other types of reports that I couldn't address in the past, as well as do more analysis."

In addition to accessing general ledger data from their MAS 200 solution, Early indicates that he is able to use BizInsight to report on Accounts Receivable and Payable data. Combined with the company's operational data and the addition of the organization's budget information, BizInsight is able to meet all of his reporting requirements. "We had never loaded our budget into MAS200, but after seeing the simplicity of creating reports, I put that data into our MAS system and now create variance reports for management."

While not looking for BizInsight to shorten his closing cycle, Early states, "As far as our close, we will always have to keep the month open for a period of time, as we manage month-end payables and receivables. What BizInsight will do is greatly reduce time in creating month-end financials."

"For example, if AP is closed on the 10th of the month," Early continues, "my old reporting process would have taken me two to three days – if not more – to create the company's financials. With BizInsight, I can use it as an analysis tool, while creating updated reports in one click. This gives us more time to go back and

look at our financial position and make adjustments in the same month. In the past, those adjustments tended to get put into the next period."

A Bright Future Ahead

Moving forward, Mr. Early sees BizInsight addressing other reporting needs for Autobell, such as getting information out to store managers and analyzing store profitability. "BizInsight will be great for that," comments Early.

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"I am finding it easy and – quite honestly – very enjoyable to work with BizInsight," concludes Early. "It's helped us improve the turnaround time on report development, taken out many manual tasks, given us better visibility into our

data, eliminated risk and improved the accuracy of our reports. It's the missing link of what we've needed for our financial reporting. I haven't seen anything better than BizInsight."

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