PYRAMID ANALYTICS

blokker.

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JOHN DE KEUNING
IT Director at Blokker

Pyramid Accelerates Blokker's Data-Driven Transformation

Netherlands retailer starts to reap the rewards of centralized data and more sophisticated analytics

Key Figures

BUSINESS UNITS EQUIPPED WITH ANALYTICS
5

CUSTOMER BENEFITS
Self-service analytics with governance and security

INCREASED PERFORMANCE
Increase stock availability by 5 percent, generating millions of extra euro in turnoverand sellers

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE
Combine and centralize data in one place for querying, modelling, and visualizing

Blokker is a leading Dutch retailer, selling household items and toys through 340 stores across the Netherlands. In an increasingly competitive landscape, the company aspired to become a data-driven organization, to move beyond basic BI (Business Intelligence) tools and have better visibility across the business to drive profitability.

To advance the strategy, the company migrated all its transactional data into a central data warehouse. "There wasn't an application left that we hadn't taken data out of and stored in our warehouse; now we wanted a data reporting and analytics tool to sit on top of it," said John de Keuning, IT Director.

The need for change was urgent. A legacy QlikView solution used sales data and not much else, according to de Keuning, while other tools fulfilled siloed functions and added complexity without providing the centralized view of margin and stock data that the business wanted.

A new analytics department was set up to access a single source of data that would provide BI to a wide range of internal departments. "One of the short-term goals was to centralize the data, bring it all together as much as we could, visualize it and make it available to different business units," explained Floris van der Pant, Manager of Pricing & Analytics.

They wanted a platform that could create reports and dashboards on a daily and weekly basis, even hourly, for analyzing store traffic and determining staff levels needed to run outlets more efficiently. In other parts of the business, executives were looking for longer-term reports to inform strategy.

Solution

Because the business runs on a Microsoft stack, it made sense to consider Microsoft's Power BI platform, but digging into the integration features saw Pyramid emerge as the product that would deliver insights faster. "The problem with Power BI is that if you want to create a report and use the same information for a dashboard, you have to rebuild it," explained de Keuning. "With Pyramid you can use the same logic for both, so it's faster and more cost effective."

Blokker was implemented and integrated with all the structured data in the data warehouse, as well as operational databases. This has enabled van der Pant and his team to surface the data into multiple business units, including Category Management, Sales, Marketing, Supply Chain, and Business Operations.

Pyramid enables self-service access to data sets for individual modelling but doesn't allow employees to collect data themselves. This level of control was important to Blokker. "Some of our people wanted Power BI so they could run their own queries on it, but we didn't want the disruption," said de Keuning. Part of the appeal of Pyramid is that it facilitates self-service without compromising control, thereby avoiding the BI sprawl that some systems generate.

The analytics team used the implementation to redefine KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and make them more accurate. Key numbers like revenue and margins would sometimes vary between supply chain and sales, for example, so there was an opportunity to achieve consistency, ensuring all the business was working off the same figures. Critical KPIs, such as reported revenue and product availability, are much more accurate now.

Benefits

Combining data from different systems and centralizing it in one place for querying, modelling, and visualizing has been the biggest benefit for Blokker. Pyramid has provided an analytics layer to an evolving architecture that has advanced the retailer's move towards data-driven decision making. "Pyramid has definitely empowered us to become more data-driven," said Floris van der Pant. "For example, we can optimize our supply chain to make sure we never go out of stock; our sales department can pinpoint fraud with a level of detail that was never there before. We can track other metrics as well, such as assortment optimization, supplier performance, planning of opening hours, product returns, omnichannel reporting, Far East management, and more."

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Improved supply chain visibility directly addressed an issue around customers turning up at stores expecting to buy products that were unavailable. Not only has the problem been eliminated, the data enables products to be placed where they are more likely to sell. This has resulted in tangible financial benefits.

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Pyramid also helped Blokker through the COVID-19 pandemic. Analysis of how stores were performing informed shop hours and staff availability, enabling the business to better cope with restricted opening times. It also tracked a successful move to online sales with orders increasing by 50 percent.

While progress has been good, de Keuning makes it clear that the retailer is only at the start of a journey. A lot of the features and functionality within Pyramid are still be explored, but a significant step has been taken towards becoming data-driven. "We really weren't there before," he said. "Now we have a centralized analytics department that's close to the business and looking to do more. We're starting to change the mindset, to make decisions based more on data than intuition and gut feeling."

With Pyramid Analytics, Blokker can:

1   Combine data from different systems and centralize it in one place for querying, modelling, and visualizing

2   Improve supply chain visibility to provide better insight into product availability and increase customer satisfaction

3   Analyze store performance to better coordinate store hours and staff availability during the COVID-19 pandemic

4   Track in-store versus online sales (with orders of the former increasing by 50 percent during the pandemic)

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