



North Coast Electric

Top-rated electrical distributor takes reporting and analytics to the next level

Company Facts

- Location: Seattle, Washington
- Industry: Electrical
- Number of Employees: 600
- Web site: www.northcoastelectric.com

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Les Johnson, SVP of Information Technology and CIO | North Coast Electric

Success Highlights

Challenge

- Help a large Seattle-based electrical distributor augment their Eclipse solution with advanced reporting and analytics capabilities

Solution

- Epicor® Eclipse™ with MITS Distributor Analytics

Benefits

- Discovered actionable information and insights
- Saved hours of time on a regular basis, thanks to new reports and analysis cubes
- Improved use of scarce IT resources, freeing them for more complex tasks

Seattle-based North Coast Electric, founded in 1913, is a family-owned and operated, full-service electrical distributor with 34 locations across the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, and Arizona. The company, consistently ranked in the top 25 electrical distributors by *Electrical Wholesaling*, supplies a wide range of electrical equipment to the electrical contractor, factory automation, industrial maintenance/repairs/operating (MRO), and commercial and institutional markets.

In 2005, North Coast Electric decided to replace a 20-year-old legacy business system with Epicor Eclipse, a full-range enterprise resource planning (ERP) software solution designed specifically for distributors.

From the beginning, North Coast knew it would need to significantly augment the Epicor Eclipse solution with reporting and analytics capabilities. “We have a proven, report-driven management style at North Coast,” says Senior Vice President of Information Technology and CIO Les Johnson, “so access to information is critical—and we knew Epicor Eclipse to be based on MultiValue data structures, which are highly efficient, but minimally transparent.”

Choosing MITS Distributor Analytics

Unwilling to “reinvent the wheel”—as Johnson describes the notion of developing in-house reporting and analytics functionality—North Coast Electric looked carefully at third-party providers of analytics tools. With its solutions already being re-sold as an Eclipse add-on solution by Epicor, and because of its familiarity with both Eclipse and MultiValue databases, MITS was an easy choice.

North Coast implemented Eclipse in late 2006, and began working with MITS the following spring to integrate the MITS Discover online analytical processing (OLAP) solution. To ensure both security and efficient operation of their Eclipse system, North Coast requires all analysis and reporting be conducted on a separate server, housing access-tuned data to be synchronized daily with the operational system. Fortunately, MITS' solution can be deployed in this fashion, creating "hypercubes"—analytics-ready data environments—and "report sources" used for creating operational reports, all stored separately from operational data.

According to Johnson, "MITS' solution is UniVerse (MultiValue database) friendly; it 'understands' Eclipse and how to get at the data (for example, subvalues in a complex sales order). We can go from a matrix (two-dimensional, with rows and columns of data) to a three-dimensional cube (showing trends over time). And with the MITS Discover interface, it's easy to add or remove columns in a report, sort through the data, compare columns, etc."

The challenge was refreshing the hypercubes and report sources quickly enough. At North Coast, up-to-date information had to be available by 7:30 a.m., requiring the report server to be fully refreshed within a short, 11-hour window.

Results

North Coast Electric went live with MITS Discover and MITS Report in spring 2008. The data now updates daily, and North Coast has nearly 350 users on the combined MITS solution, now called MITS Distributor Analytics.

MITS Distributor Analytics provides North Coast with actionable information and insights. Business users are able to access, create and customize reports themselves, and convert them into Microsoft® Excel®, PDF files or e-mails, freeing the company's IT personnel for more complex tasks. By moving the bulk of their report processing to a dedicated MITS Report server, 90 percent of North Coast's reporting is now done away from the Eclipse server, saving CPUs and memory.

Johnson comments, "MITS' solution is always continuing to improve and expand. For example, they introduced dashboards and scorecards that are accessible for our inventory management, inside and field sales, territory and branch managers, and executives to review. There are many ways we use the reports. Cost control is a real advantage; we can analyze data in real time, such as reviewing income/expense statements (e.g., for travel anomalies). We have the ability to enter budget numbers, compare them to last year or last quarter, and prorate them to see how accurate we are." Likewise, the sales team can look at end-of-month statistics, review top performers (salespeople or customers), and compare pricelines (by vendor or product).

"We have been very satisfied with MITS," reports Johnson. "From day one, they've been very responsive, and we're impressed with the integrity and caliber of their people. I can't think of an instance where they didn't try their very best to meet our needs."

Many of the refinements to MITS Discover and MITS Report, made at North Coast's request, reflect a proven business model that can be leveraged by other MITS customers in the distribution world and beyond. Johnson concludes, "MITS is very committed to the Eclipse community, and listens to its suggestions. At North Coast Electric, we believe you can only improve the things you can measure. In our environment of multistep, multiperson processes, we are improving our workflows with Eclipse, and measuring quickly and identifying issues using MITS Distributor Analytics."



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About MITS

MITS helps hundreds of distributors and manufacturers leverage the data in their ERP and other business systems to make better decisions, every day and at every level of their organization. Established in 1996, MITS’ interactive reporting and business intelligence software combines industry best practices with the flexibility to meet the unique needs of every customer. From standard to custom reports, dashboards and scorecards, MITS drives sales growth, profitability, and operational efficiency for competitive advantage.

About Epicor

Epicor Software Corporation is a global leader delivering business software solutions to the manufacturing, distribution, retail, and service industries. With more than 40 years of experience, Epicor has more than 20,000 customers in over 150 countries. Epicor solutions enable companies to drive increased efficiency and improve profitability. With a history of innovation, industry expertise and passion for excellence, Epicor inspires customers to build lasting competitive advantage. Epicor provides the single point of accountability that local, regional, and global businesses demand. For more information, visit www.epicor.com.



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