Client

Aspen Pharmacare Holdings Limited is the largest pharmaceutical company in South Africa, with market capitalisation of around US$8 Billion. Aspen Australia manufactures, markets and distributes over $650M of pharmaceutical, over the counter (OTC) and nutritional products to the Australian and New Zealand markets.

Since 2012

ITeM has been a strategic technical partner of Aspen since 2012, with Aspen relying heavily on the financial reporting automation which ITeM has implemented and manages on a day to day basis.

Business Challenges

Aspen have expanded their business operations very quickly to complement their existing marketing and distribution business. This was achieved by acquiring manufacturing capabilities and nutritional businesses from existing companies within Australia.

Aspen outsourced their distribution requirements to a 3rd party to enhance their business offering. The rapid expansion left multiple applications and external vendors with data sources that required systems integration as well as a data warehouse that needed enhancements to cope with the new business model. Aspen simply could not trust the information which was being manually managed between these disparate systems.

Reporting across all the data sources was becoming problematic and time consuming. ITeM Group were engaged by Aspen to conduct the migration of the Data Warehouse and provide a solution to their data integration issues. Without this solution in place, Aspen were facing significant human resource costs associated with generating key reporting for the business.

Technical Environment

Point-to-point systems integration was acquired with no integration framework. Data feeds and Business rules were duplicated where multiple sources (e.g. ERP, Data Warehouse, web applications etc.) required access to the same information.

A legacy data warehouse running Microsoft SQL 2000 and deprecated DTS packages were still being used for core reporting alongside a deprecated Cognos 8 environment.

New external data feeds were required from Wholesalers and Aspen's new distribution partner were required alongside new ERP instances.

Management packs were being collated manually from multiple sources in Excel.

The Solution

ITeM approached these challenges with innovation and scalability in mind. An Operational Data Store (ODS) was implemented that utilised a hub-and-spoke architecture for data integration.
A new data warehouse (initially in SQL2012 which was later upgraded to SQL2017) was developed to replace the deprecated SQL 2000 database. SQL Server Integration Service (SSIS) replaced the legacy DTS packages.

ITeM Group's own Master Data Management (MDM) tool - UNiFY - was configured to consolidate the three separate general ledgers from each of the ERP systems. Over 10,000 accounts were mapped to a single hierarchy.
This hierarchy controls all consolidated financial reporting and therefore ensures consistency between various reports. Aspen is now in a position to completely trust the information within these reports, meaning their strategic decision-making capability was greatly enhanced.

ITeM conducted a review of the existing BI tool and decided to upgrade from Cognos 8 to Cognos 10.2.2 alongside Microsoft's BI stack. Management packs were configured using ITeM Group's own tool – Report Manager – which consolidates all the reports

into single PDF and Excel outputs. This saw a marked decrease in effort required by the staff who usually compiled these reports manually.

Automation of auditing was completed across various dashboards and ITeM Group's own scheduling application – Job Manager, was implemented to allow users to run a data refresh on an ad-hoc basis without needing IT involvement, eliminating wasted time from all departments.
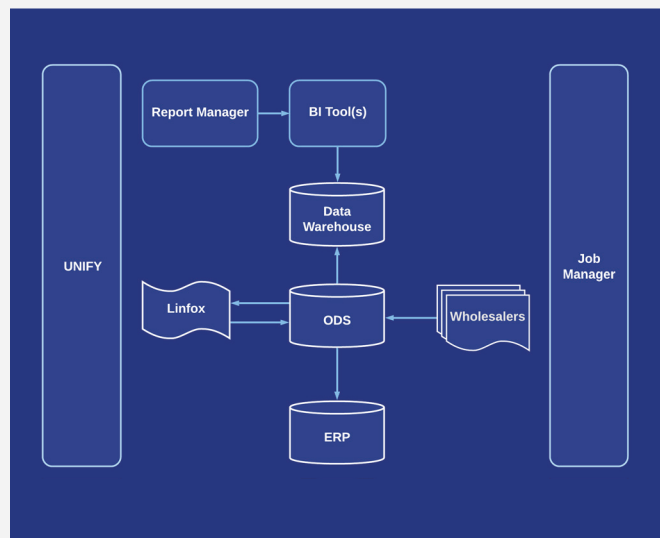
The Benefits

The central approach of an Operational Data Store for data/systems integration allowed for all systems to receive the same data feed – cutting down on significant long-term maintenance.

Manual processes, such as intercompany journals were automated via the ODS layer, cutting down on manual intervention and improving data quality.

Data for reporting is stored centrally in the Data Warehouse which can be refreshed on an ad-hoc, controlled basis without requiring IT involvement. Load on source systems is significantly reduced as reports no longer need to access these systems directly.

A system was developed to run and store all financial reports. This enabled the finance team to identify any data issues on easy to read Dashboards in the BI tool, significantly increasing accuracy across reports and business processes.

Standard financial statements have been modelled hierarchically in UNiFY so that:

• There is a single version of truth across the organisation

• Users have a graphical interface to map accounts to a reporting structure and supplement business data as required

• Consolidation of multiple businesses and accounts can be completed at run-time in each report

• Puts the users in control of how to report numbers without the need for ongoing IT-involvement

• Enforces approval workflow for auditing purposes

The CFO previously had to wait 4-5 days to complete monthly reporting using manual excel processes.   These processes are now available at the click of a button and typically take less than one hour to complete. In total, nine management packs covering all entities and divisions across the organisation are available in both PDF and Excel versions.