

QlikView business intelligence advances 150-year tradition at Robinsons Group

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Abigail Alice Tan, Head of Information Technology, Robinsons Group

Company background

Robinsons Group (Robinson and Company, Limited) operates 16 upscale retail stores in Singapore and two in Malaysia. The company is the parent of Robinsons (www.robinsons.com.sg) and John Little (www.johnlittle.com.sg), and the Singapore and Malaysia fran-

collaborative working environment for employees to achieve their full potential.

Challenge: Access to mission critical information without “tons of paper reports”

In every commercial enterprise, the timeliness of information can spell the difference between profit or loss, success or failure. Companies rely on operational reporting not just to monitor performance and report to stakeholders, but to continuously improve bottom-line results. In highly competitive retailing, receipts issued at the point of sale are the only reporting most consumers associate with their purchase. However, before and after sales transactions and across many operational functions, retailers perform extensive reporting on every aspect of business to generate more cash per customer and grow legions of loyal customers.

The Point-of-Sale (POS) system that issues purchase receipts will likely also provide reports on cash register balance, transaction details, hourly sales and each salesperson's productivity. Companies like Robinsons Group also profile and compare total sales of merchandise by item, department, store location and other criteria such as stock-to-sales ratios and inventory turnover for each of its branded chains. Other reports

chise holder for global retailer Marks & Spencer (www.marksandspencer.com). In business for almost 150 years – longer than any large retailer in Singapore – Robinsons Group clearly has proven its formula for long term success. Specifically, Robinsons Group stores provide high quality products representing the best-value for money in attractive retail environments, levels of service that exceed customers' expectations, and a



Solution Overview

Robinsons Group

Leading upscale retailer operating 18 retail stores in Singapore and Malaysia.

Industry

Retail & Wholesale Distribution

Function

Executive, Sales, Marketing, Supply Chain, Finance

Geography

Malaysia, Singapore

Challenges

- Reduce paper reporting to speed operational decisions and actions at the store level
- Implement an easy-to-use business intelligence system that employees could use effectively with very little training
- Develop at-a-glance digital views of business and operational performance

Solution

Robinsons Group deployed QlikView to 300 users across five functional areas at 18 retail stores throughout Singapore and Malaysia. Robinsons Group now analyzes store profitability, inventory turns, and consumer behavior/purchase trends to improve merchandising. With QlikView Server (64-bit), Robinsons Group immediately leveraged the invaluable data that was locked in various data sources including point-of-sale systems to achieve a real-time view of operational performance – and they now access this information 50% faster than ever before.

Benefits

- Faster access to more actionable data leading to smarter, timelier decisions
- Decreased reliance on clumsy paper reports with 80% more detailed, streamlined electronic reports
- Increased efficiency when working with data, creating reports, and sharing information
- Improved profitability with smarter merchandising, pricing, inventory, stocking, and other retail store decisions

Data Source Systems

Application: ERP, POS

QlikTech Partner

QlikView SEA

ROBINSONS

analyze specific customer behaviors such as seasonal purchasing patterns and responses to various marketing promotions. In addition, similarly extensive reporting and analyses are required to manage and coordinate inventory purchasing, warehouse stocking levels, and the movement of merchandise through supply chains.

“Our organization prints tons of paper reports,” said Abigail Alice Tan, head of information technology for Robinsons Group. “The information on all those reports is ‘mission critical’ to the success of our retail operations and how well our people can perform their jobs.”

Nonetheless, the drawbacks of paper-based reporting were no different for Robinsons Group than for any other type of enterprise. Manually examining a report for specific information, or comparing several reports to make a business decision added administrative time that, in effect, delayed action. As head of information technology, Abigail constantly seeks ways to improve information access for the company.

Solution: Business intelligence dashboards of company operations using QlikView

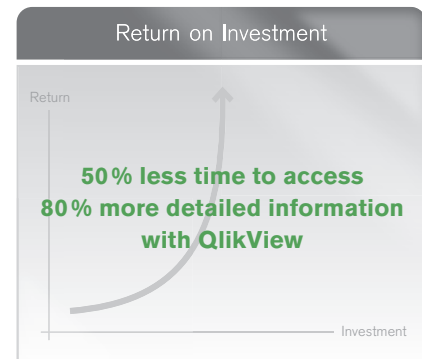
Abigail’s research led her to investigate several business intelligence solutions.

“The first products we evaluated seemed too complex for use throughout our company,” she reflected. “If our users are intimidated by the technology, they are not likely to use it. And it would have taken many months for us to build data warehouses and different OLAP cubes for each of the business areas before we could deploy the solution.”

Abigail was then introduced to QlikView by her local IT consulting and systems integration vendor. She quickly became a champion for QlikView within Robinsons Group and began working with the QlikView Southeast Asia Office in Singapore on a full product evaluation and eventual implementation.

“QlikView’s interactive interface and user friendliness won me from the very beginning,” said Abigail. “I could see people outside of our IT department working with it – and more importantly, wanting to work with it.”

Robinsons Group’s initial applications with QlikView introduced operational summary and detailed productivity dashboards – pulling data from the company’s ERP and POS systems – to provide at-a-glance views of company performance for various merchandise hierarchies and time dimensions. Sales



information over any current period could be quickly viewed and compared with any prior period by criteria such as store location, department, merchandise item, size, color, and margins. More dashboards followed. The current QlikView users at Robinsons Group are distributed throughout store operations, supply chain management, finance, marketing, and executive management.

Benefits: 50% less time to access 80% more detailed information with QlikView

“Since the introduction of QlikView, Robinsons Group’s decision makers have faster access to more actionable data leading to smarter, timelier business decisions so critical to retailing success,” said Abigail.

She estimates that users spend 50% less time to analyze data and glean more relevant results. The content of dashboard views and reports, according to Abigail, yield up to 80% more detailed information than the prior paper-based reporting.

“So we’re not just reducing all the paper,” she said. “Users are better equipped and spend more time focusing on business outcomes without having to generate and pour through multiple reports.”

To further emphasize the point, Abigail cites examples of capabilities that were unimaginable before QlikView: “Users are able to view multiple variance reports on a single dashboard display and perform data comparisons that



would be impossible with our previous processes,” she said. “There is also the easy filtering of data and drilling down into data to investigate details of any displayed results.”

Exactly how QlikView dashboards affect a retailer’s performance across all business functions can elude the average person, but here are some ways anyone who has ever ventured into a department store would understand the value of flexible, powerful business intelligence:

With QlikView, Robinsons Group chains can more quickly identify merchandise that is not selling and restock shelves with what does sell. This can include the movement of merchandise underperforming in one store to another store location with higher customer acceptance of certain items. Similarly, chains can track merchandise that sells quickly and reorder additional quantities before running out of inventory. They can price merchandise for best turnover and profit – by store and chain-wide. And they can more quickly respond to changes in market conditions and buyer preferences.

“QlikView better enables our behind-the-scenes operations to enrich our customers’ buying experiences. The



additional competitive advantages we get with QlikView all relate to our faster and deeper understanding of consumer appeal, customer relationships, and responsive merchandising,” said Abigail.

Abigail’s confidence in her decision to bring QlikView into Robinsons Group is evident— buoyed by the user acceptance and contributions to improved company operations. Another plus is the reduced demands on her own IT staff, since QlikView users require much less sup-

port than they did with the paper-based reporting.

As the retail industry continues to change and grow more competitive, success depends on the ability to make correct and quick decisions. QlikView serves as an instrumental tool for Robinsons, transforming the way the Group uses information and enhancing the quality of decisions. This will help to ensure Robinsons’ success far beyond its 150th anniversary celebration.

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