PlayCore Gets in the Swing of BPM with MDM

PlayCore ™
Moving play forward.℠

PlayCore is a leading playground equipment and

backyard products company whose products are sold under the brand names GameTime, Play & Park Structures, Robertson Industries, Ultra Play, Everlast Climbing, and Swing-N-Slide.

GameTime, Play & Park Structures, Robertson Industries, Ultra Play, and Everlast Climbing are commercial products divisions of PlayCore. These divisions manufacture and market a comprehensive array of commercial outdoor and indoor playground equipment that can be found at playgrounds in parks, schools and communities across the country, as well as athletic and recreational surfaces, park amenities and a comprehensive line of climbing wall systems

Swing-N-Slide, PlayCore's consumer products division, is the leader in the U.S. for do-it-yourself wooden playground equipment.

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>
> *Dale Tuder, Director of Financial Reporting*

Business Challenge

Each of PlayCore's six business units has its own separate general ledger (GL) system, and PlayCore corporate has a seventh. Two of them use JD Edwards (JDE); three of them use Intuit QuickBooks, while the other two use Sage MAS 200 and MYOB.

"Consolidating seven different trial balances over different divisions and separate GL systems required a lot of manual work. It was time-consuming and opened the human element of errors," says PlayCore Director of Financial Reporting Dale Tuder.

According to Tuder, there was no automated way to pull detailed information from the different GL systems into the BPM (business performance management) system they were using. As a result, only high-level information was entered into the system. For example, even though they may have had 30 to 50 different GL accounts for Sales, only one entry was made in the BPM system.

"Doing consolidations at such a high level didn't allow us to easily drill down to transaction detail," Tuder explains. "It was difficult to do the analysis we needed. For instance, we wanted to be able to look at results by Natural Class, Customer, Product or Department, but the information wasn't entered into our BPM system. In fact, the systems didn't even have Customer and Product dimensions."

"The reports we were getting out of our BPM system met the statutory requirements," says PlayCore CFO Rick Ruegger, "but they were inefficient for business performance analysis. It was very laborious to 'slice-and-dice' the information to make effective decisions. We needed to be able to free up resources that were focused on manual data consolidation processes to do more analysis and reporting." Tuder confirms, "To produce the reports that management needed, we were forced to look in other systems, or structure very complex queries. There was no opportunity to be responsive to business needs in a timely manner."

Although PlayCore had implemented what they thought would be a BPM solution, with their disparate GL systems they couldn't efficiently consolidate the information coming into the system. "Without manageable master data," says Tuder, "we didn't really have BPM."

The MDM Solution

Originally, PlayCore approached Profisee for help in restructuring the data in their BPM system to make it more usable. But as Tuder consulted with Profisee it became clear to him very quickly that, although the work could be done entirely within the existing BPM system, it would result in a maintenance nightmare for PlayCore. Profisee suggested an alternative approach, using Stratature's +EDM software. (Following the acquisition of Stratature by Microsoft in 2007, the founders and management team of Stratature formed Profisee. +EDM is the acclaimed master data management software developed by Stratature that became the core of the Microsoft Master Data Management solution.)

"Dale saw the value of a master data management application right away," confirms Profisee principal and MDM practice leader Adam Hanson. "Without +EDM, PlayCore was looking at something like 35 consulting days, with a very intensive data-mapping and ETL (extract, transform and load) process, to restructure their BPM system to support the consolidations and results reporting they needed. Even then, ongoing maintenance would have been trapped with database analysts, or would have required a significant effort building screens so that maintenance could be performed by the financial analysts. And that doesn't begin to address responding to business changes down the road."

+EDM's intelligent mapping functionality, on the other hand, would enable them to avoid unnecessary translation. As a result,

they could complete the very complex mapping required to deliver a robust working system in less than three weeks—and without the maintenance burden.

Profisee built a prototype +EDM system, with sample data from PlayCore, in order to show them what could be done in the area of BPM if they had the right master data.

Tuder and Ruegger were impressed. "+EDM pulled out buried information about our business performance in terms of customers, products, and functional areas. We hadn't been able to do that previously," admits Ruegger. "We were booking very granular transactions in our GL systems, but to extract the true meaning of the data, we needed the mapping that +EDM would give us."

The work began with the creation of data cubes in the BPM system, breaking down the data into different dimensions. The biggest of these was the Account dimension, with thousands of accounts tracked in the various GL systems. While the GLs track other data as attributes of Accounts, in the BPM system, each is a separate dimension.

Profisee consultant Michael Soble explains, "With +EDM, we were able to use the attributes of the Account dimension to determine what customer, product and department goes along with each account. In this way we were able to automatically derive the appropriate hierarchies, effectively attach the Customer dimension and so on to the corresponding Account, so that when we loaded the data into the BPM system, PlayCore would be able to analyze their business performance on any dimension."

"This was just what we needed," says Tuder. "+EDM not only created the data hierarchies we needed to consolidate results from

the different GL systems, it gave us one central place to manage the resulting hierarchies. This makes it much easier to maintain detailed data and structures. For example, the JDE & MAS 200 GL systems concatenate a lot of information into each account ID number. This not only led to an inflated number of accounts—a unique ID to reflect each attribute—but it also created a maintenance nightmare when we had to add a new account. Now, we only have to add the account in one place, then just set four or five attributes mapped to the correct customer, department & product, for the right roll-up."

Tuder continues, "In addition to aggregating information from our GL systems, +EDM also enables us to pull out specifics, like cost of goods sold to a specific customer, from across our divisions. It's the intelligent mapping in +EDM that lets us get the information into the BPM system so we can do this kind of analysis. I just wish we'd known about +EDM when we were first setting up the BPM system. It would have saved us a lot of time and frustration. Now, finally, we can begin to get the results we were looking for when we invested in the BPM system to begin with."

Summary

+EDM enables PlayCore to fully leverage their BPM system for efficient, timely analysis. It gives PlayCore the ability to produce quick, correct comparisons and reports on Natural Class, Department, Customer, Product, Account, and Company—without worrying about the underlying GL, but with all of the necessary ties to financial statements, enabling them to drill down where necessary.

About Profisee

Profisee is a highly specialized consulting and services company. It assists large and mid-sized organizations envision, design, implement and operate planning and forecasting systems tailored to meet the challenging demands of their complex and dynamic business.

Profisee specializes in helping organizations implement business intelligence applications as key enablers for decision support, performance measurement, profitability improvement and process improvement initiatives.

Profisee provides world class master data management services for large organizations looking to leverage MDM processes and technology to improve data accuracy, systems integration, and transparency. Profisee, founded by the founders and management team of Stratature—the master data management software company acquired by Microsoft—employs some of the world's most experienced MDM consultants and the first project and design methodology dedicated to MDM.

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