

Customer Success Story

Porex chooses Adaptive Insights over traditional on-premise CPM options



Porex Corporation
Manufacturing
Fairburn, GA

Challenges

- Provide an easier-to-manage forecasting solution
- Provide users with self-service reporting
- Reduce reliance on IT

Why Adaptive Insights:

- Evaluation team rated Adaptive Planning, IBM Cognos TM1, Oracle Hyperion, and Prophix
- Adaptive Planning rated easiest to use and best value
- SaaS-based solution ideal for global operations

Results:

- Management and end-users enjoy ease of use
- Employees empowered through ability to create their own custom reports
- No IT resources required for global deployment and management
- Robust capabilities support complex planning and reporting needs

Introduction

Porex Corporation is an industry leader and innovator in the field of porous materials. For more than 50 years Porex has applied its extensive material science, product design, and manufacturing expertise to design unique custom product solutions that overcome complex project challenges. Porex products and parts are used in everything from consumer goods such as children's markers and home scent diffusers to medical and bioscience devices such as dialysis systems and DNA research equipment. Based in Fairburn, Georgia, Porex has a global workforce of 700 employees.

The Challenge

Forecasting is important to Porex, which has manufacturing plants in the United States, Germany, Malaysia, and Scotland, serving some 3,000 customers in 65 countries with about 10,000 active SKUs. The company forecasts in multiple currencies, and at the SKU level, by item, customer, sales representative, region, market segment, manufacturing location, and new and base business.

Porex has long used various planning and reporting solutions to generate profit and loss statements and departmental reports to help managers identify variances from plan, and track key measurements and business indicators.

For some years Porex had been using IBM Cognos Planning to support its forecasting efforts, but Porex analysts and other users found the product difficult to use, and felt it lacked flexibility. These characteristics caused users to feel overly reliant on the company's IT group for support and product maintenance. The company's excellent IT group was always responsive and helpful, but the small organization already had plenty on its plate supporting other areas of the business.

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As Porex approached the decision point of renewing its IBM Cognos licenses, it decided to consider other options. This was a decision the company did not take lightly. Forecasting is mission critical to Porex, so the company conducted a methodical evaluation of four Corporate Performance Management (CPM) products: IBM Cognos TM1, Oracle Hyperion, Prophix, and Adaptive Planning, part of the Adaptive Suite.

The company invited each of the four vendors to provide a product demonstration. A Porex product evaluation team created a matrix for comparison, rating all four CPM products in categories including cost, lead time for implementation, IT related support needs, web-based considerations, limitations of the product, integration with the ERP system (which for Porex meant connecting with an Oracle database), financial reporting availability, and data warehouse support.

Within the cost category, the evaluation team looked at the cost of licensing, implementation, maintenance & support, and hardware requirements. The team then created total cost of ownership (TCO) estimates for the first year of deployment, and for a combined three-year TCO.

The Solution

The Porex evaluation team determined that Adaptive provided the best forecasting solution for their needs. The solution provides Porex with a complete, integrated application for budgeting, forecasting, reporting, analysis, and consolidation across its global operations.

“Each of the vendors gave us demos,” says Aude Richez, Senior Financial Analyst at Porex. “We had a team of five people and used a set of criteria that we measured each product against. In the end we all agreed on Adaptive. Adaptive was by far the easiest to use, which was extremely important to us. It was also the least expensive, which was a bonus.”

The evaluation team liked that Adaptive offered its solution with a software as a service (SaaS) delivery model, which removed the need for capital expenditures, minimized operational expenditures, and freed the company’s IT group from having to support a forecasting infrastructure.

“SaaS delivery was a big plus for Adaptive because we didn’t want to have to get our IT team involved,” Richez says. “We have a great IT team, but they just don’t have the resources for us to ask them to do more. We really wanted to find a great hosted solution, and that is what Adaptive Planning gave us.”

Porex deployed Adaptive Planning to about 50 users around the world, ranging from analysts to senior plant managers, and the sales team. They use two instances, one for corporate financial planning and consolidation, and another for their complex sales forecasting. The sales forecasting instance, used by about 30 sales people, includes a multidimensional cube sheet for planning and analysis across some three billion dimension combinations.

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For connecting with the Porex Oracle-based ERP system, the deployment includes an Adaptive Connector, which enables automated data import from Oracle to Adaptive Planning.

In addition to making extensive use of the forecasting functions, Porex also uses Adaptive for reporting and analysis. "At least once a month during and after closing we load all of our GL balances and do our reporting out of Adaptive Planning," Richez says. "We also import transaction-level detail so that we can better understand our variances from plan."

The Results

Porex has been delighted by the benefits it has found since taking advantage of Adaptive Planning's planning and reporting solution, including ease of use, empowerment of employees to create their own reports, ability to deploy without burdening IT, robust capabilities, and exceptional support.

Ease of Use

After two years of using Adaptive, Porex continues to value the solution for one of the first characteristics that surfaced during product evaluation: ease of use.

"IBM Cognos Planning was not a simple product to use," Richez says. "It's not like Adaptive Planning where you can figure things out on your own. And with Oracle Hyperion and IBM Cognos TM1, the evaluation team felt that somebody had to walk us through how everything was built."

The ease of use issue was something that was of value not just to users, but to administration as well. "Our evaluation team found that some of the other products weren't even friendly for the power users," Richez says. "I had plenty of experience with IBM Cognos Planning, for example, and found that from the standpoint of making administrative changes and other power-user actions, it just wasn't user friendly. I fell in love with Adaptive immediately because it is powerful, flexible, and extremely easy to use."

Empowerment of Employees with Self-Service Reporting

Adaptive is so intuitive and easy to use that it empowers employees by giving them the ability to create their own reports. "I tell new users that if they can work with Excel, they can use Adaptive," Richez says. "The self-service aspect of reporting is empowering for our people because they are no longer confined to a canned set of reports. They don't have to make a request to someone else to build a new report; they can simply create their own. That is very empowering. It gives them the ability to explore data to find the information they need."

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Ability to Deploy without Burdening IT

Porex has enjoyed taking advantage of the hosted solution provided by Adaptive, with its SaaS delivery model. “We have people around the world using Adaptive Planning,” Richez says. “We have Adaptive users in Malaysia, Germany, Scotland, and the United States relying on this product, and we are so happy that we don’t have to have IT support at each location – installing updates or providing technical support. It is great to come in on a Monday morning and see that updates have been applied and we didn’t have to even think about it.”

Porex IT is happy as well. “We conferred with our IT team,” Richez says. “They knew we needed a new forecasting tool, and they were delighted we were looking at a hosted solution that they wouldn’t need to become involved in. They were already tightly booked with other concerns. Their hands were full.”

Robust Capabilities

Adaptive has proven to be a robust and reliable solution. “We’ve used the product for two years now and it has never let us down,” Richez says. “This hasn’t surprised me because during a 30-day trial period I did everything I could to break it. For the first 30 days I ignored the easy things and instead modeled the most complex applications that I could think of.”

There was plenty of complexity to throw at the system. “We forecast our sales at the item level and we have 12,000 items that we sell to 3,000 customers,” Richez says. “And our organization chart is structured by facility, and our sales are structured by region, but one European plant can manufacture items that are sold all around the world. So I created some very complex scenarios to try to break Adaptive, and was delighted to find that it wouldn’t break.”

Exceptional Customer Service

Porex was impressed with the Adaptive Insights implementation team that assisted the company in migrating to the cloud-based solution, and has been impressed since whenever a question puts them in touch with the company. “The Adaptive Professional Services project managers who were involved during the implementation were very professional, very knowledgeable, and when they couldn’t answer something immediately, they would say so,” Richez says. “They would then swiftly find the answer and get back to me. So I never had to doubt that things were going to work.”

Subsequent interactions have been just as positive. “I haven’t met anybody that works for Adaptive that doesn’t love his or her job,” Richez says. “That makes it very pleasant from the customer’s standpoint.”

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