

TFG

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JAN STEENKAMPSenior Department Manager
of Business Intelligence Projects at TFG

TFG pursues platform analytics with Pyramid

The South African retail group is transforming a complex business with faster access to disparate data sets and more accurate reporting

Key Figures



SINGLE PLATFORM VIEW
Shared data aggregated
for multiple users



FASTER REPORTING
Time to insights accelerated
across the business



FAMILIAR INTERFACE
Minimal training required
for easy-to-use tools



FUTURE-PROOF ANALYTICS
Platform works with
hybrid IT systems

Challenge

Headquartered in Cape Town, South Africa, The Foschini Group (TFG) is a diverse group with a portfolio of 29 leading fashion retail brands across various lifestyle and merchandise categories offering clothing, jewellery, cell phones, accessories, cosmetics, sporting and outdoor apparel and equipment, and homeware and furniture from value to upper market segments throughout more than 4,083 outlets in 32 countries. The firm has grown rapidly through acquisition, amassing complex back office systems along the way.

Pockets of analytics were run across different systems, including Pyramid's BI Office (earlier Pyramid version), but Jan Steenkamp, Senior Department Manager in charge of BI Projects, knew that a single platform approach would be the best way to address the scale and complexity of the data the business generated.

“We process around 20 million records daily just for our stock on hand inventory, which was too much for previous BI Tools to handle,” he said. “Pyramid was significantly faster than anything else out there. It integrated easily with Analysis Services cubes and is great at bringing different data sets together.”

Because Pyramid 2020 treats multiple data sets as a single shared resource, with an aggregated view into everything from a single stock-keeping unit



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to margins and profitability, it was selected to be the preferred analytics platform within the organisation.

Solution

Pyramid was identified as a way to provide a single view of data pulled from four business streams: merchandise management, financials, eCommerce, and manufacturing. Each has its own systems and applications, on and off premises, drawing on a wide range of vendors, including Oracle, SAP, Microsoft, and Amazon Web Services.

Steenkamp wanted to avoid moving data around, and instead leverages Pyramid for a more holistic architecture, a universal platform that would deliver more relevant data to users more quickly. Pyramid’s intuitive interface aligned with this mission. “People don’t need three days training like you do with other BI products,” said Steenkamp. “If you work in Excel, you can use Pyramid, that’s the bottom line.”

Publishing financial reports is one of the key focus areas for the analytics teams. Insightful reporting for buyers and planners run over 60-pages and cover sales, profit, stock holding, and margin. Executives use this information to inform business strategy at their monthly board meetings.

There are plans to build dashboards for real-time reporting with elements of self-service, though Steenkamp is adamant that it will remain tightly controlled. “If you don’t make sure the data is curated and trusted, self-service BI can be very bad. Pyramid has helped with best practice,” he said.

Benefits

Integrating Pyramid with TFG’s multiple systems and data sources is a work in progress but there have been significant wins along the way. The merchandise procurement team previously needed three-and-a-half days to compile reports that Pyramid now runs in 10 minutes; manufacturing used to take a week working with Excel spreadsheets to analyse data that can now be produced in a hour.

A Pyramid user within one of the business areas now spends five minutes producing a report for a Monday morning meeting that used to take hours. The time saved is now used more productively: to analyse the data for insights.

The ability to combine and analyse multiple data sets was something that Steenkamp and his team simply couldn’t do with other BI tools, but it’s not just about scale. “Data integrity and consistency is significantly better with Pyramid, and the speed of delivery of insights is much faster,” he said.

One beneficiary of this is the Finance community that receives a consolidated report each morning that integrates different data sets for analysing turnover, margins, and conversion rates—the number of people who come in stores and spend money. The immediacy of this information leads to faster and more

informed strategic decision making.

Right now, most of the reports are about aspects of the company's trading position, but the plan is to innovate with Pyramid and develop other areas like inventory analysis.

Like many companies that run their businesses across a hybrid combination of clouds and on-premise IT, TFG is finding Pyramid a powerful platform for overlaying disparate data sets with centralised analytics. "We're giving our people quicker access to consistent data that we leave in one place rather than move around," said Steenkamp. "It's a universal platform for everyone."

With Pyramid Analytics, TFG can:

- 1 Accelerate time to value with faster reporting
- 2 Deliver role-based insights from a single source of data
- 3 Access centralised analytics from hybrid environments
- 4 Innovate with new data sources generated by technologies