MAINTAINING CREDIBILITY AND RELEVANCE WITH RETAIL CUSTOMERS

Leveraging Category Management Insights Automation Technology for Competitive Advantage

INTERACTIVE **EDGE**

Data Analysis and Reporting Solutions

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's fast paced, data drenched environment, customers are asking for more analysis and insights than ever before … but they're certainly not giving more time to deliver. In fact, they're shortening cycle times for everything from assortment decisions to promotion execution to new item launches. Additionally, Retailers are revising planograms more frequently with more and more attention given to hyper local consumer demographics and preferences. All of this means that manufacturers must be able to not only procure various sets of meaningful data, they must be able to organize, interpret, and drill it down to the market level in an ever shortening window of time in order to maintain credibility and relevance with their Retail Customers.

Digging into the data and gleaning insights is one thing … turning them into professional looking, customer ready deliverables is another matter entirely. It's not enough to merely paste some data and charts onto a few slides and send them off to your sales team to present to their customer. It's essential to tell a story with the data and present it in a format that is easy for a business user to communicate and a customer to understand. This means using a combination of compelling data visualizations laid out in a logical progression that communicates the key insights behind the numbers and recommendations that your customer can take action on.

The biggest challenge to this whole approach is that manually analyzing data and preparing customized presentations across multiple brands, for multiple retail partners, is time-consuming and inefficient. Regardless of how different one Category or Product Segment might be from another, the framework for diagnosing issues and uncovering opportunities tends to be pretty consistent. Indeed, a systematic approach to insights generation is exactly what winning companies are able to achieve, particularly those that operate across multiple Categories.

In this paper, we will discuss how to leverage technology to feed multiple data sources into a single platform to generate data rich, customer focused presentations in minutes, instead of days or weeks. We will recap a real world case study of how a major U.S. Brewer leverages insights automation technology to scale out data driven, customer facing deliverables that are automatically customized to local market dimensions in a few clicks of a mouse.

Three Key Insights to Take Away from this Paper

1. Bringing together multiple data sources into analytical frameworks focused around key business needs is critical to providing your customers with valuable insight on an ongoing basis.

2. Presentation and Reporting automation technology is a necessity in order to deliver these insights to your customers with any level of frequency.

3. Speed to Insight will become increasingly important to establishing competitive advantage in your categories.

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BUSINESS CASE

Major U.S. Brewer delivers an annual business review to 300+ of their Core Wholesalers that communicates their strategy for the year and drills specific initiatives down to the local level that the wholesaler network is responsible for executing.

Key Challenges

This Review is delivered via Powerpoint and must be customized to every wholesaler in a consistent, accurate, and timely fashion. Multiple data sources are brought in to generate market specific insights and recommendations. Current process is labor intensive and prone to human error. Each business review deck typically takes an hour to hour and a half to update just the data snapshots … analysis, insights generation, and ad hoc drill downs add time to the process. Analysts are saddled with repetitive task work until all presentations are complete.

Problems this Brewer experienced with their traditional process of generating Business Reviews

Data Challenges

Size and Scope; Siloed in different platforms.

Timeliness and synchronization of updates.

Accuracy (inconsistent product, geo selections).

Wholesaler alignment from one data source to another.

Operational Constraints

Limited Manpower and Bandwidth.

Manual data pulling and transposition prone to human error.

Other important day to day tasks put on hold.

Hours spent on non value added manual tasks.

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03
PROPOSED SOLUTION AND NEW PROCESS

Data extracts from various sources loaded into XP3 Data Workshop, which aligns data sets to specific wholesaler territory and Regional views. XP3 Data Workshop brings all data sets into one reporting platform that will drive all key analytic snapshots.

Powerpoint Deck created to communicate market specific Selling Story and Plan, including corporate directives, product imagery, and key business analytics. All analytic snapshots are connected to centralized database that allows charts and data tables to be changed on the fly and updated automatically when new data becomes available.

XP3 Presentation Generator used to generate 300+ distinct presentations customized to each Wholesaler's sales figures and tap handle data. All presentations run automatically in the background, with minimal human intervention. XP3 Presentation Generation Engine pulls slices of data relevant to specific wholesaler territory cuts and feeds market specific data into every data driven object throughout the presentation, including headlines, commentary, and data source citations.

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04
KEY BENEFITS OF NEW AUTOMATED PROCESS

Analyst Team

Business Reviews generated automatically as opposed to manually compiled.

Non value added time spent pulling data and copying/pasting into PowerPoint eliminated.

More time available for analyzing results, generating insights, and digging deeper into specific opportunities.

Data integrity issues as a result of human error virtually eliminated.

Sales Team

Business Reviews delivered well ahead of traditional schedule.

Consistent format delivered across all customers, improving consistency of sales messaging Less time spent going back and forth on validity of data.

Better baseline of business analytics, meaning more time available to focus on business building initiatives.

Wholesaler Customers

Receive strategic direction and information about key sales initiatives earlier.

More productive business development conversations as a result of Sales Managers having time to dig into the data and findings.

More Wholesalers receiving analytic documents and business insight support.

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ROADMAP FOR LEVERAGING AN AUTOMATED PROCESS FOR INSIGHTS GENERATION

Step 1

Determine the core business questions that need to be addressed and what data sets will help inform the situation assessment and solutions. Within those data sets, what level of granularity is necessary for geography, product, and time dimensions? What measures or facts will provide the answers? See Figure 2.1 for example framework.

What data sets should I leverage to drive decisions?	What regional, Store Format, and other Geographic Dimensions should be considered?	What are the most important Brand & Product Dimensions to pay attention to?

Historical Trends/Performance

Comp Market Analysis

Shopper Behavior

Attitudinal Scores

Affinity/Basket Analysis

Inventory and Profitability Metrics

Regional Consumption Dynamics

Store Demographic Profiles

Importance of Local and Regional Brands

Trip Mission Predominance

Urban vs. Suburban vs. Rural

Key sub-categories and segments to track

New pack or form trends to capitalize on

Pack size and flavor duplication reduction

Loyalty/Substitutability

Leakage to competitive retail outlets

Quality tier groupings

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Step 2

Load Your Data Into an Analytic and/or Visualization Platform. XP3 Data Workshop provides a business user friendly set of utilities that allow you to bring in data feeds from multiple sources and create a repeatable workflow and common platform for analyzing multiple facets of your business. Ensure all key cuts of the data are included in the data, such as Measures/Facts, Markets and Retailers, Time Periods being assessed, and Products at whatever level of granularity you will need to sufficiently communicate the selling story.
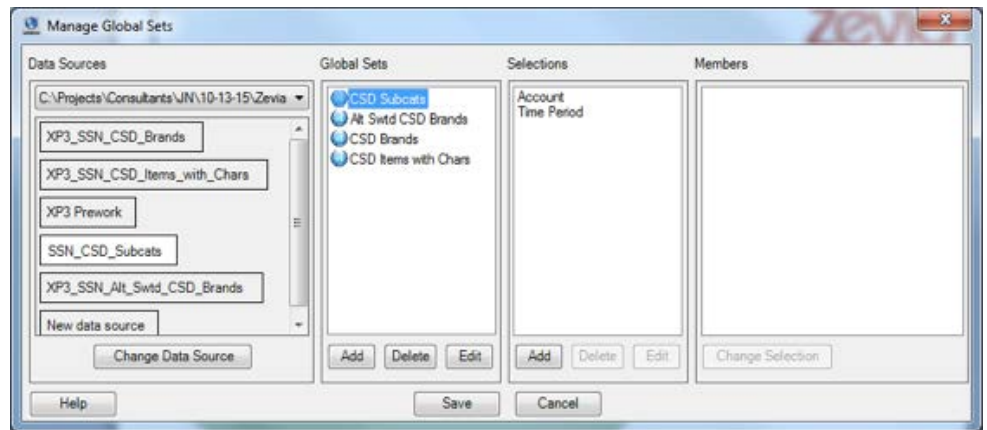

Step 3

Create a story board that will guide your intended audience down the path of your analysis with headlines that serve as guide posts and check points. Determine what pieces of data you need to support each piece of the story and whether that data needs to be drilled down to the market or customer level. This is the most critical, and often the most challenging part of the process, as it takes a lot of up front thought about potential use cases, functionality, end user capabilities, and a variety of other variables that must be accounted for. However, the better the story board, the easier it is for downstream users to consume the content and use it effectively for business building initiatives.

Step 4

Connect your data and create the visualizations that will tell your story in the most compelling, visually appealing manner. Using a solution such as XP3 Presentation Builder, an analyst can build data driven charts, tables, and graphs right within Powerpoint, which can then be updated to any geography, product, time period, or measure available in the database and can also be automatically refreshed when new data becomes available. See Figure 2.3. Entire presentations can be updated from one Market or Retailer to another in just a few clicks, saving significant amounts of time when it comes to building and rebuilding customized analytics deliverables.
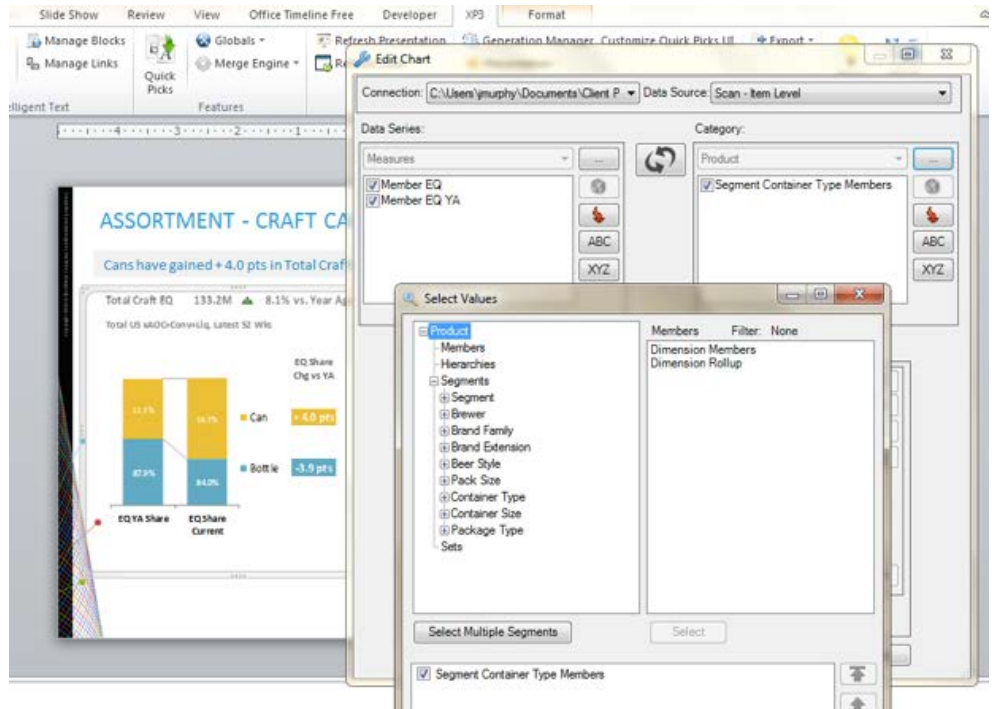
Conclusions

The idea of building a framework and process for automating business analytics may seem daunting. Indeed, it does require a higher level of thinking and accounting for many variables that are challenging to control for. However, with the appropriate technology and a solid team that understands the needs of the business and can translate those into a set of actionable insights and recommendations, the sky is the limit. Why spend time rebuilding the wheel when there are solutions out there that can eliminate most of the manual steps involved in insights generation? The demands for insights from Retailers and other business partners will only continue to grow, especially as business users become more analytical and sophisticated when making business decisions. In order to keep pace, manufacturers must be able to drill into their data quickly, glean the appropriate insights, and communicate that information back to customers in a clean, professional format that is easy to understand and take action on.

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