

## CASE STUDY

# MFA Oil Company: Striking it Rich with Data

MFA Oil Company, a farmer-owned energy supply cooperative with more than 40,000 members, is the eighth largest propane retailer in the United States. The company supplies fuels, lubricants and propane to customers in 12 states. Through a subsidiary, MFA Oil operates Break Time convenience stores in Missouri and Arkansas, Jiffy Lube franchises in central Missouri, and Big O Tires franchises in Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma. The company is headquartered in Columbia, Missouri.

### Becoming a Data Driven Business – The Build Versus Buy Decision

MFA Oil Company made the strategic decision to become more data driven as a way for business leaders to have faster access to vital information. This was especially important to for repetitive reporting tasks such as the monthly close of financial statements, which historically could take seven to 10 days to complete each month.

MFA Oil's Information Technology Services (ITS) department conducted a proof-of-concept (POC) for the JD Edwards Finance module General Ledger. The goal of the POC was to determine a "build versus buy" decision regarding the advanced reporting and analytics required by the business. ITS had the technical knowledge and skills to build their own analytic structure in-house and that was a definite consideration. However, the company runs a lean organization and with other day-to-day IT tasks, custom development would be challenging.

The first step in the POC was to determine a build viability. This required working with the finance team to determine the table structures, attributes, data cleansing, normalization, etc. needed to create the company's General Ledger reports. With so many JDE tables, this was no small task. The ITS team was experienced and knowledgeable with BI tools, but less familiar with the data and structure within JD Edwards. To add another level of complexity, the company was also in the middle of transitioning to JDE EnterpriseOne.

Following a thorough evaluation of the task, the ITS department presented their project analysis to the executive team. Due to the significant challenges of the project and the company's limited in-house resources, MFA Oil began investigating third-party solutions.

### MFA Oil Company Selects Preferred Strategies QuickLaunch

After a thorough evaluation of the JD Edwards reporting & analytics products on the market, specifically those that support self-service reporting, MFA Oil Company selected Preferred Strategies QuickLaunch™ for Microsoft® Power BI. "We really liked the alignment between the QuickLaunch solution

#### COMPANY SNAPSHOT



**Company:** MFA Oil Company

**Project Objective:** MFA Oil Company made the strategic decision to become more data-driven as a way for business leaders to gain faster access to vital information.

**Solution:** Deploy QuickLaunch for Power BI to easily access data from the following JDE Modules: Finance, Sales, Transportation, HR, and Procurement.

**Benefits:** MFA Oil Company will achieve widespread adoption of self-service data across the organization, will substantially reduce the IT workload, and has already gained faster and better insights into sales margin data.



*“We really liked the alignment between the QuickLaunch solution and our own discovery of what was required to support our internal business teams.”*

**MATT BOYCE, SR. MANAGER OF DEVELOPMENT OPERATIONS, MFA**

and our own discovery of what was required to support our internal business teams,” explained Matt Boyce, Sr. Manager of Development Operations.

There were many aspects of QuickLaunch that made it stand out from competitors. For one, Preferred Strategies has invested over 10 years into deep knowledge of JDE data and delivers self-service reporting and analytics solutions that align with the major JDE modules. This means that rather than custom-coding each module, QuickLaunch provides the secret sauce that unlocks the full potential of JDE data and, importantly, this dramatically simplifies the implementation and reduces time to go live. MFA Oil Company selected Preferred Strategies QuickLaunch Data Warehouse solution on premise.

MFA Oil Company uses multiple JDE modules including; Finance (GL, AR, AP), Sales, Inventory, Transportation, HR, and Procurement. The company has built out reporting and analytics dashboards for multiple modules. In the Sales Module, for example, there are now dashboards that display sales volume. Business users have the ability to filter results by business unit, geography, product SKU and many other simple filter controls to quickly, simply and precisely find the information they need to run the business. The executive team has been impressed to date with the ability to receive constantly refreshed insights in these dashboards and drill into that data to view sales details by product group, division, geography, territory, etc.

### Margin for Improvement

Under the previous reporting system, MFA Oil Company could report sales volume but not sales margin. There

could be as much as a 45-day delay in receiving sales margin data, and therefore, the tremendous lag in actionable information had a negative impact on the business. The operations executive team required more immediate insight into the sales margin to more accurately predict changes and make timely adjustments to improve margins.

This issue was resolved with QuickLaunch and Power BI, which provides the operations team with hourly-updated margins and allows users to drill down by consumer group, area, etc., to get a clear and concise picture of margins in their business immediately, rather than waiting weeks.

“Using Preferred Strategies and Power BI, MFA Oil Company expects to see a tremendous improvement in operations,” says Boyce. “We are starting to see excitement and a willingness to embrace Power BI and the concept of self-service data from more and more teams across the company. This will have a tremendously positive impact in reducing the workload in IT, as we will no longer have to support every data request.”



*These sample dashboards illustrate the types of reports and visualizations that MFA Oil employees now have at their fingertips, giving business users the instant data needed to make competitive decisions.*