

Fertile Ground

How The Scotts Miracle-Gro

Company Cultivates Sales Productivity Using
SAP NetWeaver Portal and SAP BusinessObjects Solutions

by **Davin Wilfrid**

Growing a healthy garden is similar to growing a healthy business — you need the right amount of sunlight in just the right spots. The exploding popularity of business intelligence (BI) software is a testament to this requirement, as companies recognize the need to pull critical data out of the shade and into the light.

At The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company, a new business strategy focused on regionalization presented the IT team with an opportunity to bring near-real-time BI tools to its sales staff. Building on an existing SAP NetWeaver Portal implementation with SAP BusinessObjects solutions, Scotts was able to deliver a full-featured workbench that empowers its sales staffers to receive and review relevant product information, and act quickly on that information to boost sales.

“This was a major initiative for the company, and we were able to come to the table with proven technology that we knew would work,” says Dave Judson, Senior Director of Business Intelligence & Content and Collaboration Management at Scotts.

For a company like Scotts, a leading marketer of branded consumer products for lawn and garden care, business is highly seasonal — so real-time inventory, shipment, and

point-of-sale (POS) data is critical. Insufficient data can lead salespeople to miss narrow windows of opportunity.

“Being seasonal doesn’t mean that we only sell in April and May. For example, we have multiple fertilizer products — some that sell in the spring, some in the summer or late fall. Therefore, the seasonality of products can be all through the year. And some seasons are only four weeks long for some of those products, so our salespeople have to be on top of their game,” says Judson.

Opportunity Takes Root

In 2009, Scotts initiated a new business strategy aimed at moving closer to the local consumer, generating consumer insight, and responding to local and regional market conditions. Scotts leadership designed three new regional offices to better support an existing regional sales force — with the organization and BI approach clearly designed to drive a regional focus to gain market share through better field sales execution. Sales managers, focused on selling through to the consumer, work directly with retailers (such as The Home Depot, Walmart, and Lowe’s) and report to district market managers, who report to zone managers and the regional VP of sales located in the new regional offices. The



The Scotts project team (L to R): Krishna Thallavarajalla, Dave Judson, Balaji Srinivasaraghavan, Karthik Palanisamy, Kristin Dean, and Dhaya Chandrasekaran

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company also has a small army of merchandisers and counselors who set shelves and displays at its major retailers, as well as provide guidance to consumers about lawn and garden care directly in store aisles.

By September 2009, Scotts had updated its employee portal, called “The Garden,” to provide role-based workbenches complete with personalized productivity tools, as illustrated in the screenshot to the right. “It has been an iterative process to bring more people to The Garden to do their jobs, to create more productivity, and to continue to provide access to new capabilities through The Garden,” says Kristin Dean, Director of eBusiness Solutions at Scotts.

At the same time that Scotts implemented its regional business model, the company began relying more heavily on SAP BusinessObjects BI tools, which would create more opportunity for sales improvements.

“We were looking at SAP BusinessObjects solutions for a while and already were using SAP Crystal Reports and



▲ “The Garden” is an employee portal that communicates Scotts’ corporate news, links integrated applications, and contains personalized productivity tools

SAP BusinessObjects Xcelsius in-house. We leveraged the urgency of the regionalization initiative to quickly secure project funding approval in order to deliver the necessary business functionality in the timeframe requested,” says Judson. “Because we had a strategic investment plan in place and an urgent business problem to solve, we were able to move the approvals right along. We were ready when an opportunity presented itself and were able to deliver on a business need.”

And Scotts was ready when it spotted an opportunity to boost the efficiency of its sales professionals by empowering them with the right data. While The Garden already offered pre-built sales reports, they were too high-level to be useful to many sales managers. To get the right information, sales managers had to generate their own reports from SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse (SAP NetWeaver BW).

“There was a perception that our salespeople were spending a lot of time running reports and not enough time in the stores selling and managing the merchandise. So the sales force recognized the

need to reduce the administrative reporting by our sales force so they could spend more time selling,” says Judson.

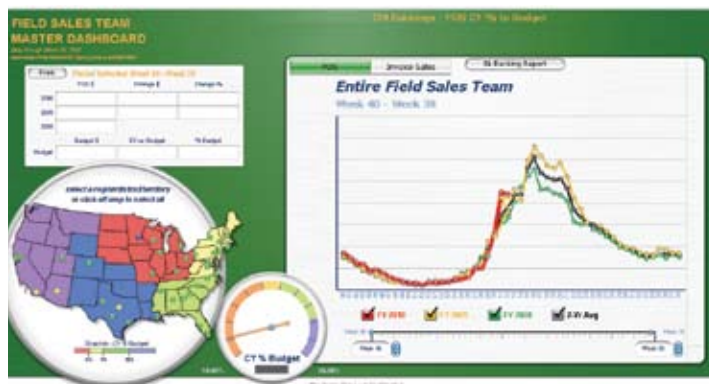
Customized Reports Delivered in a Role-Based Workbench

Scotts selected SAP BusinessObjects tools because of their ability to push information and deliver exception-based and action-oriented reports. The project team incorporated SAP Crystal Reports and SAP BusinessObjects Xcelsius from the SAP BusinessObjects XI 3.1 suite into The Garden to bring the right information to the right type of employee. The goal was to meet 80% of sales employees’ needs with pre-built reports customized to their positions, delivered through The Garden’s workbench functionality.

“The key is that no matter who you are, the workbench is role-based, so you only see the reports that you need to access,” says Judson. “You see a listing of static, pre-run reports available to you. There is a degree of interactivity

available to them, but it’s not actually going back into the database, so it’s very fast.”

Every sales professional has access to a high-level dashboard that provides an overview of sales data at the national, regional, district, and territory levels, as shown in the figure below. The dashboard includes a ranking system to help professionals assess their own performance.



▲ Scotts’ sales dashboard, built on SAP BusinessObjects Xcelsius, helps sales professionals assess their own performance

“As we all know, salespeople are competitive. That’s where their rewards come from,” says Judson. “With this dashboard, they can see how sales and POS data is progressing — and they can also see their ranking within the sales force. And that ranking can be against budget or specific to sales from previous years.”

The sales professionals have limited options for creating their own reports, because the point of the project was to free up more of their time for selling. Instead, the project team spent considerable time gathering requirements around which static reports to include (see the sidebar “Be Smart About Requirements” on page 73 for more about how Scotts approaches requirements gathering).

Sales professionals at Scotts had been running reports from SAP NetWeaver BW for almost a decade, so the project team had a good idea of the types of reports they were using. The final mix of created reports totaled around 2,700 role-based and predrilled report views, including some very specific, heavily formatted reports that would only interest a field-level sales professional, as well as some highly stylized reports for executive-level users.

The reports fall into four categories: sales, POS, opportunity, and a master dashboard. The most useful reports, according to the team, are those that provide actionable

5 Lessons Learned

from Scotts' project team

1 Be ready for opportunity. While The Garden project itself only took three months to complete, the team had been preparing for more than a year. The reorganization was simply an opportunity to execute on a vision long in the making. Because Scotts was using SAP Crystal Reports in-house already and was aware of and ready to solve the business problem, the team was able to get a project approved quickly. By the same token, the portal team had already developed a new framework for hosting The Garden, but had yet to secure the resources necessary to switch over to it. The reorganization presented a perfect opportunity.

2 Design for the user. The importance of good design is something many companies come to understand only after a project fails to resonate with its intended audience. In Scotts' case, the project team benefited from an honest assessment of The Garden. The Garden redesign team was formed to work collaboratively on all facets of creating the new The Garden.

3 Manage expectations. In some ways, The Garden became a victim of its own success. The final product was so attractive and easy to use that users started asking for capabilities beyond the potential of a portal page. Therefore, Scotts had the challenge of managing user expectations. It took some time for users to realize that the portal is not an HTML page or something in which they can drag and drop or build something from a Microsoft PowerPoint drawing.

4 Prepare for integration challenges. The project team had some difficulty locating in-house expertise for all of the main tools used — for example, those proficient in SAP NetWeaver BW were not necessarily experts in SAP NetWeaver Portal. There were also technical challenges, in part because of version issues. While Scotts was using the latest releases of SAP NetWeaver Portal and SAP BusinessObjects solutions, it was integrating data from an earlier version of SAP NetWeaver BW, which had different capabilities and security setup. Because the team members were all on the same page and learned as they went along, they quickly understood the tools better and were successful.

5 Align the company. Portals are designed to incorporate disparate functions into a seamless, one-stop interface. By nature, they are composed of features that are individually owned by different departments, so sometimes ownership issues arise. An obstacle Scotts faced during its portal implementation was to determine who sets the direction for the widespread project and has final approval. Even during the assessment, there were funding challenges, as demonstrating a clear ROI on a portal project is never a straightforward task. As a solution, the business developed an ongoing program to forge and maintain executive support and foster alignment with the company's goals.

insight based on customer needs. The opportunity report, for example, provides sales professionals with a snapshot of their product inventories compared to past years.

Green Shoots

Thus far, the sales workbench has yielded positive results, according to the team members — including these main benefits:

- Provided a new customized communication vehicle built on existing SAP NetWeaver Portal technology
- Organized all sales resources into a single, consolidated workbench
- Delivered enhanced web analytics

While the project is still being rolled out, sales professionals have already reported high user satisfaction and greater productivity.

"They're able to spend more time in the store and rely less on administrative tasks. That has a lot to do with the reporting we are pushing to the users rather than having the users pull and create the sales information themselves," says Judson.

The sales team tracks its performance with a combination of anecdotal and statistical metrics. A recent annual sales conference afforded the opportunity to interview sales professionals from various locations and job titles about The Garden, yielding overwhelmingly positive and unsolicited feedback. For example, one sales manager from Scotts' Northeast region said, "Wow, what a fantastic addition to The Garden! The one-stop for sales/POS is a great idea." The Scotts team can also track usage of The Garden through a metrics-tracking system that offers insight into which pages and views are most heavily used.

Balaji Srinivasaraghavan, Manager of Enterprise Portals at Scotts, says, "We are still tidying up some things and untying knots, but at the end of this process, we expect to have a survey to gather feedback and see if there is any room for more improvement."

When Scotts employees either see or hear about the sales team workbenches, they're telling their co-workers that they want something similar for their group, according to Karthik Palanisamy, Manager of Business Warehouse at Scotts. "That in itself indicates that while we might not be getting direct feedback, the business groups are communicating with each



Eddie Kirk, a sales manager based in Indiana, repositioning and updating a product display at a major retail partner's store

other, seeing the value, and thinking about how they can adapt it for themselves," he says.

From a reporting standpoint, business users are now looking at IT in a whole new way — rather than just asking for IT to build reports. "I think, with this initiative, they've seen that we're ahead of the game now and that we've given them a state-of-the-art, cutting-edge way to look at data," Palanisamy says. "They're looking at us more as partners. They want to listen to us and see what we bring to the table — instead of the one-way street mentality where they say, 'Go build this for us.'"

The project had other benefits as well, including making life easier for the IT staff, says Srinivasaraghavan. "Before, we had five workbenches that needed to be maintained. If we had gone regional with that system, we would have had five workbenches for each of the five regions, amounting to 25 workbenches," he says. "From a security standpoint, that would have made it difficult to onboard and offboard associates. Now that we have it all in one neat security model, the security team has had a much easier time managing everything."

Be Smart About Requirements *Scotts Emphasizes the Importance of Requirements Gathering for All Projects*

Because the focus of The Garden is to bring actionable insight to business users, the project team devoted significant time to gathering requirements before revamping the portal. In the past, the team had fallen into the trap of simply asking the users what they wanted, rather than guiding them with realistic options. According to Balaji Srinivasaraghavan, Manager of Enterprise Portals at Scotts, The Garden project offered Scotts an opportunity to be smarter about gathering requirements.

"When you go in with a blank piece of paper, it's difficult to get people to tell you what they want. Instead, we go to them with mock-ups or things we've done in the past, which gives us a template for gathering requirements. It's a much better way to reach a conclusion about what their needs are," he says.

The requirements-gathering process included 17 stakeholder interviews, a focus group, an online survey with more than 700 respondents, and a site assessment of The Garden aimed at fixing usability issues. Through the assessment, the team found that the existing site was too confusing, too "corporate," and too static to be attractive to business users.

The in-depth requirements-gathering process helped the project team members move swiftly once they had approval to purchase SAP BusinessObjects XI 3.1, because they had a clear vision of what they wanted to present to the users. The team even built the dashboard in SAP Crystal Reports, pulling data from Microsoft Excel, the year before project delivery had commenced.

"We knew the integration with SAP NetWeaver BW was going to be a challenge, but we already knew what it was going to look like because one individual spent a few months working on the requirements for it," says Dave Judson, Senior Director of Business Intelligence & Content and Collaboration Management at Scotts.

Sowing Seeds The Evolution of The Garden

In 2006, Scotts implemented SAP NetWeaver Portal and developed an internal-facing portal called “The Garden” as a way to keep its marketing department up to date on weather, trends, and other useful information. The portal enabled the company to pull that information into a single interface.

The success of that portal project led Scotts to revamp its entire employee intranet in July 2009. Scotts’ employees now use The Garden to receive corporate communications, follow links to integrated applications, and leverage productivity tools designed for their job functions.

The Garden is the company’s one-stop destination for worklife information and personalized workbenches. The intranet gives all employees access to company news, forms, and policies. The workbenches are productivity centers providing role-based access to SAP data, reports, and custom applications for specific business groups such as sales, marketing, and finance.

The same applies to content administrators and the portal team, who benefit from the efficiency of a central distribution and maintenance point.

In Bloom

The success of the project has prompted Scotts to enhance The Garden even further. In the future, the company plans to integrate advanced Web 2.0 capabilities, including forums, wikis, blogs, and other collaboration tools, plus personal profiles and cross-browser compatibility.

Currently, the company is upgrading to SAP NetWeaver BW 7.01. The team has also created a roadmap for upgrading SAP BusinessObjects XI, implementing SAP NetWeaver BW Accelerator, and integrating SAP BusinessObjects Explorer and SAP BusinessObjects Advanced Analytics.

In the meantime, the revamped portal has already delivered insight from the SAP BusinessObjects BI toolset, empowering Scotts’ sales workers to stay ahead of the competition. For the IT team, the project has not only offered an opportunity to implement cutting-edge BI tools, but also ensured its place as a strategic partner for the business.

“I think, for the first time, we are ahead of the business,” says Judson. “Now, when someone has a request for IT, we can point them to something already created rather than asking for funding to figure it out. Compared to, say, four years ago, we’ve matured. We now have a platform that has the capabilities the business needs.” ■

At a Glance

The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company

Headquarters: Marysville, Ohio

Industry: Consumer lawn and garden products

Revenue: \$3.2 billion (2009)

Employees: 8,000+

Company details:

- Founded in 1868, Scotts is the world’s largest marketer of branded consumer products for lawn and garden care
- Key products include MiracleGro, Ortho, Scotts, and consumer RoundUp lawn and garden products
- Over the past decade, Scotts LawnService has provided consumers with “do-it-for-me” on-site lawn services through its network of 160 US corporate and franchise locations
- NYSE ticker: SMG

SAP solutions:

- SAP ERP 6.0
- SAP SRM
- SAP PLM
- SAP BusinessObjects solutions
 - SAP Crystal Reports
 - SAP BusinessObjects Xcelsius
- SAP NetWeaver Portal 7.0
- SAP Business Warehouse 3.5

Timeline

- **November 2006:** Scotts launches The Garden on SAP Enterprise Portal 6.0
- **March 2008:** The project team completes technical upgrade to SAP NetWeaver Portal 7.0
- **July 2009:** Scotts redesigns The Garden and launches the revamped portal
- **August 2009:** The project team finishes designing reports and begins designing new workbench
- **September 2009:** Project team starts the new sales workbench project
- **October 2009:** Project team implements SAP BusinessObjects BI tools
- **November 2009:** Reports are completed via SAP BusinessObjects BI tools
- **January 2010:** Sales workbenches are delivered via The Garden