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A Large Specialty-Store Retailer Streamlining the Reporting System

Business Problem:

This client, a system of retail stores that caters to backyard birdfeeding hobbyists, has a network of over 300 stores across the United States and continues to expand through new franchisees. In order to monitor the overall health of the business, each store had been reporting summary sales information back to corporate using Microsoft Excel documents. This information was then re-keyed into a database for reporting and analysis purposes. Due to the large amount of information and extensive time required to manually re-enter the data, the client was not able to utilize the information in a timely manner. In addition, the data that they did receive with highly aggregated and made it very difficult to drill-down into the relevant details. The retailer decided that they needed a new reporting system, and turned to Ambassador Solutions to make this happen.

Solution Description:

After meeting with the client, Ambassador Solutions determined that their solution provided must be two-fold. Some of the stores were operating with an updated Point-of-Sale (POS) system, while the remaining stores were running without it.

As a result, Ambassador Solutions designed and developed two ETL (Extract Transform Load) processes. The first automatically collects information from 100+ POS systems, scrubs the data, and stores it in a data warehouse. The second ETL process automates the import of Excel data for the stores franchises that do not utilize POS systems. For this second solution, Ambassador developed a website where the stores can submit their Excel documents. The data from both ETL processes are combined into a single data warehouse and subsequently into SQL Server Analysis Services database. Most of the client's reports were rewritten using SQL Server Reporting Services to utilize the new data warehouse and analysis database as their data source.

Technologies Used:

Asp.NET 1.1 & 2.0 (C#)
Custom .NET
SQL Server 2008
Visual Studio 2003 & 2005
Reporting Services

Benefits/Results:

As a result of the new reporting system, sales data is now available in a much timelier manner. In addition, the information is no longer prone to the data-entry errors that were previously a major issue. For the franchisees with POS systems, data is now available at a much more granular level. This allows additional analysis to be done on sales information that was not previously possible. The detailed information is now available to the stores to help with their local sales and marketing efforts.