

[TDWI Member Profile]

MEMBER NAME: DONNA WELCH

MEMBER COMPANY: A NATIONAL FINANCIAL HOLDINGS COMPANY

YEARS AS A TDWI MEMBER: 1

ABOUT YOUR CURRENT PROJECT:

What are the biggest benefits of BI to your company?

A consolidated repository for a “single version of the truth.” As with many organizations, we have data stored in flat files, on relational tables, in VSAM files, and sometimes in Excel spreadsheets. Getting timely and accurate answers can be a daunting challenge. While BI won’t be a silver bullet, we do expect it to provide our clients with an invaluable tool to meet the demands of their jobs.

When was the data warehouse first implemented?

The initial work began in 2005. We are still building, with plans to implement our first major section this fall.

How many people use BI products in your company? How many access the warehouse directly?

Our marketing group (about five analysts) uses a data mart that was built earlier this year just for them. Several groups in our loan area use another data mart. No one accesses the warehouse directly. Our plan is to build custom data marts from the warehouse as we roll BI out to the enterprise.

What technologies are you using for data warehousing? What BI tools? Are you using any packaged analytic applications?

We have IBM’s UDB for the data warehouse. BI tools include SAS BI and WebFOCUS. We are looking at other tools to round out our arsenal.

What would you describe as your biggest BI/DW success?

The marketing group has had good success with their effort. Our current project with our direct loans group will be a strong success story once we implement.

What would you describe as the biggest challenge?

Trying to quickly retool IT to meet the demands of BI. Because we have a huge investment in the older mainframe technologies, we also have a large contingency of mainframe staff. Our challenge is to provide them with training and experience that will help them become valuable BI consultants. They already have the data knowledge, which is a huge asset to both themselves and to the company.

What is the next planned improvement, and when will it be implemented?

We are looking at forming a center for excellence, implementing the first part before the end of 2006.

How large is your BI/DW team?

We have around 50 data warehouse team members, and only 2 dedicated BI team members so far.

What is your role on that team?

My official role is BI consultant. Obviously, with only two of us, I’m wearing several hats. My coworker is highly skilled in dimensional modeling and working with the tools, so I’m focusing on the requirements and user training side of things.

ABOUT YOU:

Is your background mostly in business or in IT?

I began in IT back in the “old” days of mainframe. With the advent of client/server technology, I became a business partner so

that my group could create processes to meet business needs.

How long have you worked in BI/DW? How long in business/IT prior to data warehousing?

I’ve been in BI since long before it was called that. I created my first data mart back in 1985 (we called it a reporting database back then). I’ve been in IT since 1981.

What do you find most personally rewarding about this field?

I take great satisfaction in helping customers articulate their business problems, then designing solutions that solve those problems.

What do you find most challenging?

Outdated IT processes and thinking that slow down progress. Many are still enamored with the technology and forget that it is simply a tool to aid the business. As I tell younger IT developers, we don’t need a Learjet to drive across the street for a loaf of bread.

What are your professional development goals?

I plan to obtain the CBIP certification within the next six months. [For more information about CBIP, visit: www.cbipro.com.]

What do you think will be the next major innovation in the field?

I’m just waiting to see! Hopefully it will be even easier client tools. I want to eradicate that “us” and “them” mentality between IT and the business world. Successful IT professionals are simply an extension of the business team. ■

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