

Organization

AutoZone is the leading retailer and a leading distributor of automotive replacement parts and accessories in the U.S.

Autozone**The Challenge**

Roll out a flexible analytics environment to thousands of stores without burdening field workers with custom software or complex report procedures.

The Strategy

Work with AutoZone's existing computers, databases, and information systems to create a self-service reporting and analytics system that casual users can adopt quickly.

The Results

AutoZone's web-based analytics environment delivers accurate information throughout the enterprise and helps to automate key business processes, from store operations to customer satisfaction reporting.

Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS, Report Caster, Professional Services, adaptors for Oracle, DB2, Informix, Microsoft SQL Server, and Hadoop.

Information Builders helps organizations transform data into business value. Our business intelligence, integration, and data integrity solutions enable smarter decision-making, strengthen customer relationships, improve performance, and drive growth.



AutoZone Shifts Into High Gear With Big Data Analytics

National Retailer Tunes Up Analytical Activities at 5,500 Stores

AutoZone is the leading retailer and distributor of automotive replacement parts and accessories in the U. S. Since opening its first store in Forrest City, Arkansas in 1979, this fast-moving company has depended on information technology (IT) to move to the forefront of the automotive aftermarket industry. Leveraging a highly efficient business model for logistics and distribution, the company has grown steadily throughout the U.S. and recently penetrated international markets in Mexico and Brazil.

Today, AutoZone is continuing its tradition of technical leadership by using the WebFOCUS business intelligence (BI) and analytics platform from Information Builders throughout its organization. From HR training to inventory control, store operations to customer satisfaction reporting, AutoZone depends on WebFOCUS to manage and run its business.

"On an average Monday morning, WebFOCUS typically handles more than 1 million requests for information, with sub-second response time to our entire user community," says Todd Jones, a business intelligence analyst at AutoZone. "WebFOCUS is reliable and secure."

Jones is the administrator for two large WebFOCUS environments, which support approximately 70,000 users at nearly 5,500 stores. Division, regional, and district managers can visualize data from multiple stores under their purview and roll it up into performance summaries. Store managers can view sales activities at their

individual stores. It's easy to see how their stores are performing with respect to sales, timekeeping, inventory, payroll, and many other business functions. They can drill down to individual employees to see which specific transactions each person has completed during the day.

"With WebFOCUS, our analytics are timelier, more accurate, and more consistent," Jones adds. "WebFOCUS lets people access data that they couldn't access before."

Analytics for the Enterprise

AutoZone attributes its success to its ability to provide customers with the right parts at the right prices. Each of its stores carries an extensive line of parts for cars, sport utility vehicles, vans, and light trucks, including new and remanufactured hard parts, maintenance items, and accessories. Many stores also have a commercial sales program that provides commercial credit and prompt delivery of parts and other products to local, regional, and national repair garages, dealers, service stations, and public sector accounts. The company also has an active online presence.

In the past, the IT department generated most of AutoZone's corporate reports at the Store Support Center. While these reports were adequate for monitoring basic activities, managers discovered they needed additional reporting capabilities as the company grew. They also wanted better utilities for drilling into and analyzing data. They envisioned an analytics environment that could reveal operational metrics on demand, while also serving users in the field.

Information Builders fulfilled this vision, demonstrating a versatile analytics solution that could run on many different computing platforms and access many different types of data. Users would only need a standard web browser to tap into a vast array of guided self-service analytic functionality. They could easily analyze data with InfoApps™, which provide a convenient interface on computers, tablets, and phones, with secure links to enterprise data sources.

These and other capabilities convinced the selection team to purchase WebFOCUS. They found the software to be easier to use and less expensive than competing solutions.

Big Data Analysis

Recently, AutoZone embarked on a big data initiative to stay abreast of how its fleet of 12,500 delivery vehicles is performing. Analyzing this information helps the company monitor driver habits and predict maintenance intervals. Sensors on AutoZone's commercial delivery vehicles convey real-time information about where each vehicle is located, how fast they are traveling, and a wide range of service metrics. Raw telematics data is stored in Oracle for analysis, in conjunction with other enterprise information.

"We are looking for outliers such as which drivers are speeding, where we have safety issues, and other variables to help us minimize risk," Jones explains. "Knowing where each vehicle is in relation to our inventory helps us optimize our dispatching activities."

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Business Intelligence Analyst
AutoZone**

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Guided Self-Service Analytics

Today, AutoZone delivers self-service analytics across all of its stores. Each store relies on WebFOCUS dashboards to access and drill into sophisticated HTML displays. The IT department has the ability to control the data on the WebFOCUS servers, and people throughout the organization are able to help themselves to the information they need.

Instead of continually creating new reports, like they did in the past, Jones and his team created a library of reports and analyses that people in sales, HR, finance, and other departments can access on demand. One HR report is designed to give employees recognition for anniversary dates and pin dates. WebFOCUS tracks these dates to make sure the HR department is on top of employee milestones. Other reports empower district managers to keep track of salary ranges, turnover, and workforce information.

The loss prevention department uses WebFOCUS to predict which stores are most likely to experience shrinkage and theft based on location and other variables. Stores are categorized using a stoplight metaphor, with red, yellow, and green indicators, helping regional loss prevention managers know where they should focus their time and energy.

Another dashboard reveals how well the stores are complying with AutoZone’s inventory management programs. Point-of-sale data from the entire store network is loaded into a repository at headquarters. Authorized users can query that repository to look at sales information.

Automatic Data Delivery

Store managers and operations personnel like to receive information from WebFOCUS ReportCaster, which sends updates by e-mail each morning. AutoZone’s store operations personnel rely on these automatic updates to track inventory performance in each individual store, hub store, and distribution center.

Other WebFOCUS updates help analysts and regional staff see if sales are trending up or down for different categories of parts. They can gauge how quickly products are moving and how the workforce is performing. One of the WebFOCUS environments is customer-facing, enabling thousands of merchandizing vendors to manage its inventory, see which products are selling, and optimize the merchandise mix.

WebFOCUS has become an important part of AutoZone’s widespread operation. It helps the company maintain leadership in highly competitive markets and it fulfills the company’s commitment to customer satisfaction by making sure that workers always have accurate information about KPIs, sales, inventory, and labor requirements. WebFOCUS delivers information and insight to make everyone in the organization more productive.

Worldwide Offices

Corporate Headquarters

Two Penn Plaza
New York, NY 10121-2898
(212) 736-4433
(800) 969-4636

United States

Atlanta, GA* (770) 395-9913
Boston, MA* (781) 224-7660
Channels (770) 677-9923
Chicago, IL* (630) 971-6700
Cincinnati, OH* (513) 891-2338
Dallas, TX* (972) 398-4100
Denver, CO* (303) 770-4440
Detroit, MI* (248) 641-8820
Federal Systems, D.C.* (703) 276-9006
Florham Park, NJ (973) 593-0022
Houston, TX* (713) 952-4800
Los Angeles, CA* (310) 615-0735
Minneapolis, MN* (651) 602-9100
New York, NY* (212) 736-4433
Philadelphia, PA* (610) 940-0790
Pittsburgh, PA (412) 494-9699
San Jose, CA* (408) 453-7600
Seattle, WA (206) 624-9055
St. Louis, MO* (636) 519-1411, ext. 321
Washington, D.C.* (703) 276-9006

International

Australia*
Melbourne 61-3-9631-7900
Sydney 61-2-8223-0600
Austria Raffaisen Informatik Consulting GmbH
Wien 43-1-211-36-3344
Brazil
São Paulo 55-11-3372-0300
Canada
Calgary (403) 718-9828
Montreal* (514) 421-1555
Toronto* (416) 364-2760
Vancouver (604) 688-2499
China Peacom, Inc.
Fuzhou 86-15-8800-93995
Czech Republic InfoBuild Software CE s.r.o.
Praha 420-234-234-773
Estonia InfoBuild Estonia OÜ
Tallinn 372-618-1585
Finland InfoBuild Oy
Espoo 358-207-580-840
France*
Suresnes +33 (0)1-49-00-66-00
■ Luxembourg
Germany
Eschborn* 49-6196-775-76-0
Greece Applied Science Ltd.
Athens 30-210-699-8225
Guatemala IDS de Centroamerica
Guatemala City (502) 2412-4212
India* InfoBuild India
Chennai 91-44-42177082
Israel Team Software Ltd.
Petah-Tikva 972-54-799-1799
Italy
Agrate Brianza 39-039-59-66-200
Japan KK Ashisuto
Tokyo 81-3-5276-5863
Latvia InfoBuild Lithuania, UAB
Vilnius 370-5-268-3327
Lithuania InfoBuild Lithuania, UAB
Vilnius 370-5-268-3327
Mexico
Mexico City 52-55-5062-0660
Middle East Anel Arabia Ltd. Co.
Riyadh 966-11-483-0016
■ Bahrain ■ Kuwait ■ Oman ■ Qatar
■ Saudi Arabia ■ United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Netherlands*

Amstelveen 31 (0)20-4563333
■ Belgium

Nigeria InfoBuild Nigeria
Garki-Abuja 234-9-290-2621

Norway InfoBuild Norge AS c/o Okonor
Tynset 358-0-207-580-840

Portugal

Lisboa 351-217-217-400

Singapore Automatic Identification Technology Ltd.
Singapore 65-69080191/92

South Africa InfoBuild (Pty) Ltd.
Johannesburg 27-11-064-5668

South Korea

Dfocus Co., Ltd.
Seoul 02-3452-3900
UVANSYS, Inc.
Seoul 82-2-832-0705

Southeast Asia Information Builders SEAsia Pte. Ltd.
Singapore 60-172980912

■ Bangladesh ■ Brunei ■ Burma ■ Cambodia
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Spain

Barcelona 34-93-452-63-85
Bilbao 34-94-400-88-05
Madrid* 34-91-710-22-75

Sweden

Stockholm 46-8-76-46-000

Switzerland

Brugg 41-44-839-49-49

Taiwan

Galaxy Software Services, Inc.
Taipei 886-2-2586-7890, ext. 114

Tunisia North Africa Business Consulting
Bizerte 215-22-86-85-79

Turkey Paladin Bilisim Danismanlik A.S.
Istanbul 90-532-111-32-82

United Kingdom*

Uxbridge Middlesex 44-20-7107-4000

Venezuela InfoServices Consulting
Caracas 58-212-261-5663

West Africa

InfoBuild FSA
Abidjan 225-01-17-61-15

* Training facilities are located at these offices.

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Corporate Headquarters

Two Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10121-2898 (212) 736-4433; Fax (212) 967-6406

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