

Sachs Group

Sachs Group and Symmetry Corporation Collaborate to Deliver OLAP Analysis



HEALTH CARE INTELLIGENCE

Industry leader Sachs Group is known for providing strategic health care information and innovative business solutions. To offer easy access to qualitative and quantitative data customized to each client's business needs, Sachs turned to Microsoft Certified Solution Provider Symmetry Corporation. Symmetry designed and implemented middleware for a Web-based deployment of critical business information, developing the eSachs™ product with Microsoft® SQL Server™ 7.0 OLAP Services and Internet Information Server running on Windows NT® 4.0.

Solution Overview

Microsoft Certified Solution Provider

Symmetry Corporation

Digital Nervous System Scenario

Business Intelligence

Industry

Health care

Company Profile

Sachs Group (<http://www.sachs.com>) is a leading provider of strategic information to the health care industry. They offer current market intelligence and analysis, industry benchmarks, customized marketing solutions, and relationship marketing services.

Situation

Sachs Group aimed to increase the value and utility of information across their client base. This involved taking data access and dissemination to a new level in the marketplace.

Business Solution

With MCSP Symmetry Corporation, the company created multidimensional databases with Microsoft SQL Server OLAP Services and used IIS with ASP. The resulting eSachs product has the analytical capabilities to provide customized information to each client.

Benefits

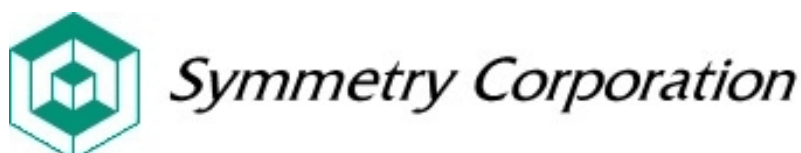
With eSachs, Sachs Group is looking forward to an expanding business base, as its clients take advantage of better information to grow their businesses.

The Business of Health Care

Since 1984, Sachs Group has provided strategic information and business solutions to more than 1,000 integrated delivery systems, health plans, physician practice management companies, and other health care organizations nationwide. The company's innovative solutions facilitate clients' short- and long-term growth and profitability. Through its close client partnerships, Sachs realized that business needs and the business environment overall were rapidly evolving. Health care organizations were forced to make well-informed business decisions more quickly than ever – in an increasingly competitive marketplace. And yet, they often had fewer internal resources available.

At the same time, Sachs' competitors had reduced planning information to a commodity – emphasizing price rather than value. And the Balanced Budget Amendment significantly impacted health care organizations' bottom lines. Sachs knew their clients needed more information and improved systems in order to analyze market opportunities. To maximize growth, clients also required easy access to strategic, reliable information without having to rely exclusively on in-house analytic support. The information had to be structured in response to business questions and not just to accommodate data sources.

Sachs believed that the logical solution was a product that leveraged Internet capabilities throughout client organizations. The flexibility of the Internet allowed them to address organizations' analytical needs, and also provide easy and fast access to information. Instead of merely automating analysts' tasks, Sachs looked at the way clients used information to make



business decisions and added business intelligence capabilities to the system. With Symmetry Corporation, they developed eSachs, a product that represents a revolutionary step in the provision of health care information.

Selecting the Right Partner

Sachs selected Symmetry Corporation, a leading OLAP consulting firm, to design and implement middleware for the Web-based deployment of critical business information. Recommended to Sachs by Knosys, vendors of ProClarity™, Symmetry is known for OLAP expertise. Because time to market was key, Sachs needed a consulting firm that could hit the ground running with regard to business intelligence. Founded in 1986, Symmetry has a history of creating successful and referenceable OLAP solutions. Symmetry's consultants bring a unique combination of technical know-how and an ability to understand business problems and translate them into technical solutions.

Using Microsoft SQL Server 7.0 OLAP Services, Symmetry created a multidimensional architecture connecting Sachs' data warehouse with the Internet-deployed eSachs product.

The database design was challenging for two reasons. First, Symmetry had to determine how to transform data in the warehouse that was organized by subject (such as inpatient or outpatient data) into information organized by service line (such as pediatrics or women's services). Second, the database had to be designed with information tailored to each subscribing institution, meaning that non-standard definitions of health care areas and sets of diagnoses for each area had to be accommodated.

"We needed a way to translate the expertise of our industry analysts into a design reflecting their knowledge of the health care industry," Amy Mosser, Vice President of Sachs Group, explained. "It's important to work with consultants who are experienced enough to understand your needs – Symmetry was able to translate our business issues into an OLAP database architecture. Their OLAP experience along with Sachs' understanding of clients' information needs enabled us to create a sophisticated database that is also simple to use and manage. The result was eSachs, a new business tool for the health care industry."

High Performance, Low Cost

Sachs required a powerful, easy-to-use system to help clients understand and analyze data, and the data needed to be available with minimal effort – query times had to be short. Key to Symmetry and Sachs' database selection were Microsoft SQL Server OLAP Services' query times – they're among the best on the market. Rapid query response is especially crucial to Internet applications, and OLAP Services was able to handle very large volumes of data and to perform complex calculations. Clients had some security concerns about the Internet, but they were reassured by the fact that their data is located in a secure database, accessible only to them. The primary database is 2.5 gigabytes in size; the largest of the individual databases is 250 megabytes and there are 82 cubes per database. There are 17 dimensions, 400 measures and 80% aggregation.

"eSachs provides customized health care data. Clients adapt data to their specific needs, enabling them to make better and more profitable decisions. With Symmetry's OLAP consultants and Microsoft SQL Server 7.0 OLAP Services, we have a product with the business intelligence to meet clients' needs into the new millennium."

Amy Mosser
Vice President
Sachs Group

“Because eSachs is a Sachs product, it had to live up to our reputation for robustness and reliability. We felt comfortable that OLAP Services would provide 24X7 online information delivery in a production environment,” said Aaron Schwartz, Director of Sachs Group.

“In addition to high performance, cost was also a key concern. Including software, ongoing maintenance, and training, the Symmetry solution cost less than all other options. We are expecting thousands of users to access eSachs; Internet access allows us to reach current clients, new organizations, and an unlimited number of people within an organization,” he continued. OLAP Services’ speed in database creation, rapid query response times, and ease of use have been key to the product’s success. In addition, the Aggregation Analyzer module of OLAP Services allows the databases to be configured with minimal management.

Microsoft SQL Server OLAP Services creates the multidimensional databases that contain health care, demographic, and other vital data. For each client, the three-step process requires between fifteen minutes and two hours to complete. Steps include:

1. The SQL Server-based database generates a custom OLAP Services database.
2. A Visual Basic® program uses information from SQL Server to further define the OLAP Services database.
3. Data is loaded from Sachs’ data warehouse into the OLAP Services database and aggregated.

Business Intelligence with eSachs

Establishing a strong partnership and providing clients with leading-edge technology, Sachs Group helps clients maximize opportunities for growth and profitability. Sachs is the first health care data provider to provide market-specific data via the Internet, and has allowed analysts to devote 80% of their time to working with data and only 20% searching for it, instead of the inverse, which had been standard. Plans for the eSachs product involve adding service lines and other critical information – the flexibility of OLAP Services will make enhancements easy.

“In addition to meeting client needs with a state-of-the-art, Web-based analytical system, we believe that Sachs itself will benefit. Because eSachs makes it easier for clients to access information they need when they need it, the product expands our client base tremendously,” says Mosser.

“Furthermore, eSachs expands information use and access throughout the organization, and complements information systems already in place. The guaranteed data consistency and accessibility make it easier for people across departments at many locations to use data leveraging the work of planning analysts,” says Mosser.

“The bottom line? Faster and better-informed decision making.”

For More Information

About Symmetry Corporation

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Founded in 1986, Symmetry Corporation is a leading OLAP consulting firm with consultants in Northern California, Washington, Illinois, Delaware, and Nebraska. Symmetry provides a full range of consulting services, including vendor evaluation and selection criteria, project management, database design, and complete system implementation for finance, marketing, and sales OLAP applications.

Symmetry’s ADAPT™ methodology is the first design methodology developed specifically for designing multidimensional database applications. Symmetry’s clients include Fortune 500 companies in industries as diverse as retailing, consumer products, banking, insurance, health care, manufacturing, telecommunications, and utilities.

About Microsoft

Call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (800) 563-9048. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft office.

For more information about Microsoft BackOffice®-based digital nervous system (DNS) business intelligence solutions, visit the Microsoft DNS page on the World Wide Web, at <http://www.microsoft.com/dns/>.

Microsoft Software Used

SQL Server™ 7.0 including
OLAP Services
Visual Basic 6.0
Internet Information Server 4.0

Other Products Used

Red Brick by Informix Software
(175 gigabytes)
SAS (900 gigabytes)

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