



# Reed & Mackay harnesses analytics to save clients' travel costs

*Using analysis of routes, airlines and destinations to negotiate better fares*

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## Overview

### Business challenge

As a business travel specialist, Reed & Mackay offers its clients a high-end service that complies with their corporate travel policies and regulations, and saves them £3 for every £1 spent. To quantify these savings and give clients greater insight into their overall travel expenses, Reed & Mackay needs a sophisticated business analytics platform – but its existing bespoke reporting system was struggling to scale up as the company grew.

### Solution

Reed & Mackay worked with Assimil8, an IBM® Business Partner, to replace its existing system with a new data warehouse and analytics solution based on IBM Cognos® Business Intelligence software. The solution provides both interactive and static reports for internal users, and will soon allow clients to log in and generate reports for themselves via the Reed & Mackay website.

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Founded in the City of London in 1962, Reed & Mackay is a premier UK travel management specialist with around 300 employees. The company's main business is to provide business travel services, mainly for clients in the professional services sector; for example, it numbers 50 of the UK's top 100 law firms among its clients. It also provides event management services, as well as high-end leisure travel services for private clients.

Matthew Everson, IT Director at Reed & Mackay, explains the company's philosophy: "We pride ourselves on delivering the best service available in the industry – and although we operate at the high end of the market, we also deliver bigger savings than most of our rivals. The promise we make is that for every £1 a client spends with us, they will get £3 back through savings on flights, hotels and so on. And it's not a hollow promise: thanks to our investment in business analytics technologies, we can actually prove it."

### The value of analytics

Every month, the company generates detailed reports for each of its clients, showing the trips that their employees have booked, the airlines and hotels they have used, the fares they have paid, and the reductions from the standard fare that Reed & Mackay has secured for them. As well as quantifying the cost savings, these reports also highlight any compliance issues, which helps to ensure that all trips comply fully with the client's travel policies.

"In general, our IT department has always built its own systems, and our analytics solution was no exception: we had developed a solution based on a highly customised version of Crystal Reports," comments Matthew Everson. "However, as our business continues to grow, this system was beginning to struggle to scale to meet the demand. It was also slightly cumbersome: when we needed to publish reports on our website, we had to reformat them using a different tool. We wanted a slicker, more automated process."



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## Business Benefits

- Analyses clients' journeys, routes and destinations, helping Reed & Mackay and its clients to negotiate more effectively with airlines and obtain substantially reduced fares.
  - Enables Reed & Mackay to create reports that quantify these savings for clients, proving the value of its service. Typical savings compared to regular published airline tariffs are in excess of 40 percent.
  - Improves data quality, reducing the time Reed & Mackay's account managers need to spend on checking reports by 30 percent.
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## Looking for a standard solution

The IT team decided to migrate its reports from the existing system to a truly enterprise solution that would offer the required functionality and be easier to maintain, develop and extend. Initially, the plan was to use SAP BusinessObjects – the company was advised that this was a similar product to Crystal Reports and would make the implementation easier. However, after nine months, this project was abandoned.

“We were working with an accredited partner of SAP BusinessObjects, but they didn't really understand our vision, and even the simplest things seemed very difficult to achieve,” explains Matthew Everson. “We needed a new approach and a new partner, and that's where Assimil8 came in.”

## Building a partnership with Assimil8

Assimil8, an IBM Business Partner that specialises in business analytics projects, believed that IBM Cognos Business Intelligence software would be a better fit with Reed & Mackay's requirements, and offered to perform a proof-of-concept.

“Assimil8 came in and achieved more in a four-day proof of concept than our previous partner had managed in nine months,” states Matthew Everson. “They had an excellent attitude; they listened to what we needed and gave us the right advice. As a result, we decided to build a new data warehouse, which would improve the quality of our data and give us a single source of truth. On top of this, we would use IBM Cognos Business Intelligence to provide web-based dynamic analysis and reporting.

“The project itself went well, and we stayed within our budget. The most challenging aspects of the project involved creating the data warehouse and re-structuring our data; implementing the Cognos software was more straightforward, and Assimil8 worked well with our in-house team to get us up and running. We've now hired a dedicated internal resource to manage the solution going forward; the nice thing about using an enterprise solution like Cognos Business Intelligence is that it's easier to find people with the right skills, so we had a really strong group of candidates to choose from.”

## Faster, more accurate reporting

The solution now enables account managers at Reed & Mackay to create reports for clients much more quickly and accurately.

“Our old reporting system generated the reports quite quickly, but the underlying data integrity wasn't as good as it is now,” explains Matthew Everson. “Account managers used to spend about 30 percent of their time just checking the data – whereas now, they have much more confidence that the results are accurate first time. With the hours that they save, they can now spend much more time with their clients, building closer relationships and delivering an even better level of service.”

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## Solution Components

### Software

- IBM® Cognos® Business Intelligence

### IBM Business Partner

- Assimil8
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*“In terms of data integrity, scalability and ease of maintenance and support, the IBM Cognos solution is an important step forward for business analytics at Reed & Mackay.”*

— Matthew Everson, IT Director, Reed & Mackay

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## Greater flexibility and dynamism

Cognos Business Intelligence also gives the company much more flexibility in terms of the kinds of analysis it can perform.

“Report Studio and Query Studio give us a much more dynamic approach,” says Matthew Everson. “We’re not just limited to static reports; we can drill through the data from high-level summaries to detailed insight into individual bookings. We can also quickly create ad-hoc queries when a client wants to answer a specific question. These capabilities help our users focus on the information they actually want, instead of having to sift through a standard report that’s as long as ‘War & Peace!’”

## Giving clients direct access

Reed & Mackay will soon launch a web portal that will allow travel and purchasing managers and other key decision-makers within client organisations to access the Cognos solution themselves, enabling them to create reports on their own travel data via a secure web-based portal connection. The company is also interested in the new Active Report capability of Cognos 10, which allows subsets of data to be analysed interactively even when a connection to the central system is not available.

“Active Report could be ideal for client visits,” says Matthew Everson. “If one of our account managers is at a client’s office and wants to walk them through their monthly report, Active Report will let them do it even if an internet connection isn’t available.”

## Looking to the future

Reed & Mackay is also considering extending the use of Cognos more widely within the organisation. The IT and finance teams are currently working together to assess the viability of using the solution to generate the company’s financial reports too.

Matthew Everson concludes: “In terms of data integrity, scalability and ease of maintenance and support, the IBM Cognos solution is an important step forward for business analytics at Reed & Mackay. More importantly, the more flexible and dynamic reporting capabilities it offers will help us provide our clients with even greater insight into their travel activities – helping us to deliver bigger savings and a better level of service.”

## About Assimil8

Assimil8 is a market leader in business intelligence and data warehousing solutions, incorporating consulting expertise in financial reporting, planning and forecasting, enabling clients to address all aspects of corporate performance management.

To learn more about products, services and solutions from Assimil8, visit: [www.assimil8.com](http://www.assimil8.com)



## About IBM Business Analytics

IBM Business Analytics software delivers actionable insights decision-makers need to achieve better business performance. IBM offers a comprehensive, unified portfolio of business intelligence, predictive and advanced analytics, financial performance and strategy management, governance, risk and compliance and analytic applications.

With IBM software, companies can spot trends, patterns and anomalies, compare “what if” scenarios, predict potential threats and opportunities, identify and manage key business risks and plan, budget and forecast resources. With these deep analytic capabilities our customers around the world can better understand, anticipate and shape business outcomes.

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