The Live Music Capital of the World, the seat of Texas state government and home of the University of Texas, Austin, Texas is a community of unparalleled creativity and progressivism. With a fast growing population of about 800,000, the City of Austin is the 11th most populous city in the United States.

Slow Time to Insight

In 2012 the City of Austin's Financial Services Department received national recognition for an integrated financial portal that gave citizens and staff access to summary and detailed information about the city's financial operations. Although the portal provided consolidated vendor information and unprecedented levels of information accessibility, internal users were still having trouble accessing the data they needed.

The City of Austin's databases consisted of a combination of home-grown ERP systems and other custom applications. The process of integrating data from their financial system and two custom built software systems to complete ad hoc reporting was extremely time-consuming. The resulting redundancy in user requests for similar types of reports caused the IT department to shift their focus from systems management to the tedious task of answering specific user questions.

Despite the efforts of the IT department, every departmental group was attempting to do BI on their own. This was extremely costly from both a maintenance and service perspective. The City of Austin decided it was necessary to look into purchasing an existing off-the-shelf analytics platform.

An Organically Engineered BI Solution

With a corporate-wide vision in mind, the financial department began the rigorous process of procuring a new BI solution. After bringing together the big players from each departmental group, the City of Austin determined its critical BI requirements to be ease of use for business users, ease of deployment, and holistic functionality. "What stuck with us during the process –one of the draws to using MicroStrategy– was that it seems like the company had grown organically. Instead of buying little pieces and trying to fit widgets together," stated Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Greg Canally, "…it just felt more organic to us that we were buying a whole solution and not a bunch of disparate pieces that were thrown together." Greg Canally also recognized MicroStrategy's organically grown

Company:

City of Austin

Applications:

Budgeting, Capital Expenditure, and Finance Application

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"We see MicroStrategy as an integral piece to help us achieve that best managed city goal that we continually strive for."

– Greg Canally
  Deputy Chief Financial Officer,
  City of Austin, Texas

Before MicroStrategy

• Time consuming ad hoc reporting

• Redundancy in user requests

• Costly maintenance of disparate business intelligence systems

Goals

• Foster visibility through highly intuitive ad hoc reporting

• Acquire business intelligence platform with full functionality through unified interface

After MicroStrategy

• Organization-wide push of centralized ad hoc reporting

• Self-service reporting has created happy, satisfied users

• Self-service reporting enables IT to focus on value-add activities

• Interdepartmental collaboration

• Improving citizen quality of life with business intelligence incorporated into everyday solutions

architecture as a wise investment of taxpayer money as it necessitated little to no back end development, thus requiring far fewer resources. For a technologically savvy city with a focus on cost effective innovation, MicroStrategy seemed like a natural fit.

Improving Internal Processes for Greater Efficiency

With MicroStrategy, the City of Austin has a standard reporting platform providing citywide data integrity as all reports are created accessing the same data sets and definitions. Through the use of MicroStrategy's visual data discovery tool, Visual Insight, the organization has been able to push ad hoc reporting down into the workforce. Empowered to quickly and easily satisfy their own reporting needs, users are happier and the IT department is free to focus on more value-added work as well. Business users are able to start looking at ways to connect their data to quickly respond to citizen and city council requests. Furthermore, different departments can now have richer conversations with each other and focus on more global issues.

The City of Austin has many MicroStrategy projects underway to improve a wide variety of processes throughout the city that will lower costs and improve services. The organization is building an HR application that will use dashboards to increase employee visibility amongst executive users. Another part of the organization that is implementing a MicroStrategy application is Permits and Planning. "Austin is a booming city right now… one of the things that is important as people are applying for building permits and site plan permits is mapping that workflow," states Canally. The application will provide both staff and customers with an updated status of the review process. Additionally, the City of Austin is experimenting with MicroStrategy Mobile functionality in the field to collect code compliance infraction data on properties.

Innovation for the Future

An innovative way that the City of Austin is looking to use business intelligence to make a difference in the lives of citizens every day is through a police force application that will monitor crime statistics. Using ESRI mapping, crime will be tracked and mapped daily enabling the city to make smarter decisions about where to dispatch police resources, increasing safety and cost efficiency. "In essence, I think we've scratched the surface [of] the capabilities, given where we started from," says Canally, "but looking out we think there's a lot of opportunity to really change how government can interact with its citizens from a technology perspective."