Sonic Automotive, Inc., a Fortune 500 company based in Charlotte, N.C., is one of the nation's largest automotive retailers. Founded with five dealerships in 1997, Sonic now owns over 100 dealerships franchises and 20 collision repair centers in 15 states. The company sells some 30 brands of cars and light trucks.

The need for mobile

Sonic wants to ensure that executives and management have 24-7 access to daily business tracking metrics via a mobile platform. To achieve mobility, the company is investing heavily in Apple mobile technology, deploying iPads and iPhones to the executive team, regional management, and dealership management. Beginning in March of 2010, Sonic started the process of identifying potential partners to assist with the development of mobile apps that would enable their business processes and provide a platform to bring mobile business intelligence and reporting to the leadership.

MicroStrategy selected as mobile BI solution

In an effort to explore the potential benefits of mobile apps, Heath Byrd, Sonic's CIO, and other Sonic executives attended an executive briefing at Apple's Headquarters in Cupertino, California in March, 2010. The first mobile app initiative for Sonic was to identify a reporting tool that would provide a predictable, repeatable, and sustainable platform to enable Sonic's vision of mobile reporting and business intelligence.

After a failed pilot with another provider, Sonic reached out to MicroStrategy. MicroStrategy stepped in and conducted a Mobile QuickStrike, a short consulting engagement, for Sonic Automotive. This was the first step in what has become a strong mobile BI initiative across Sonic. MicroStrategy produced superior versions of the previous provider's reports, and developed a brand new iPad app for Sonic. Today, MicroStrategy has replaced the mobile reporting solution and Microsoft BI tools that were in place at Sonic.

A comprehensive, intuitive iPad app

The iPad app built for Sonic is focused on an overarching view of business performance that touches on internal sales, service, finance, and insurance as well as external market data. This app is already used every day by top executives and others to keep tabs on the performance of Sonic-owned auto dealerships.

Sonic corporate executives and Regional Vice Presidents rely on the new iPad app daily to evaluate sales performance at its 100+ dealerships in 26 major U.S. metropolitan markets. Executives, including the VP of Operations, CFO, President, CIO, SVP/Controller, and VP of Corporate Accounting, leverage the app to analyze

Company:
Sonic Automotive, Inc.

Applications:
Sales, service, financial, and insurance evaluation iPad app

"*Mobility and business intelligence are two of our top strategic priorities. Our executive and regional leadership teams live on the road, traveling from dealership to dealership. This app allows them to stay connected to the data they need to run the business.*"

– Heath Byrd, VP and CIO, Sonic Automotive

daily operating costs and month-to-date results compared to forecasts and previous months.

The app provides a scorecard for each dealership with insight into sales effectiveness across automotive brands, product categories, and geographic regions. It also provides information on each dealership's compliance with corporate Playbooks.

The Sonic Executive Team and Regional Leadership use the iPad app to conduct monthly financial reviews and compare performance against that of other dealerships across regions. With this app, Sonic replaces large binders of spreadsheets and saves significant time by eliminating the need to perform manual analysis of the data.

"We've been impressed with the performance and convenience of our new iPad app built on MicroStrategy Mobile," says Richard Hanks, Director Enterprise Business Intelligence at Sonic Automotive.

Hanks continues, "By leveraging this user-friendly iPad app, our executives and dealership management save a great deal of time and gain valuable insights into the business every day. It was surprisingly fast to build the app, which we were able to deploy in a matter of weeks."

Sonic Automotive enlisted MicroStrategy to develop and deploy its mobile application, FIRE (Financial and Insurance Reporting Engine), resulting in an increase in car product sales by 38%. Since rolling out FIRE, Sonic Automotive has gone from selling between $800 and $900 in products per car, to nearly $1,100.