

How Skipton Building Society proved that you don't have to be small to be nimble



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Skipton Building Society is reaping the benefits of process change. A powerful Business Intelligence solution from Whistlebrook enabled the Society to transform management information processes and support critical decisions with quick, accurate performance insights.

Skipton Building Society is the UK's fourth largest building society. Founded in 1853, Skipton has 90 branches throughout the UK, with over 860,000 customers. The Society is parent to 21 subsidiary companies, many of which operate in the financial market.

As part of a drive to improve management information processes, Skipton created a central Management Information team to support different areas of the business. Using an extended version of Whistlebrook's Analytics for Financial Institutions (ALFI®) solution, the team provides critical performance reporting to committees, management teams, and the branch network.

Process change

Before implementing ALFI®, Skipton Building Society relied on analysts across the business to provide performance information. In what was a very labour intensive process, they would pull data from the Society's core system, and use multiple spreadsheets to analyse and present it.

Joanne Holgate, Business Information Manager, says, "We wanted more flexibility and interactivity. We were getting static output; you couldn't drill down into it. Presentation was poor and you couldn't combine it with other applications. We wanted to give users more functionality, consistency and control."

Scalable solution

Skipton had to be able to react quickly to changes in a highly competitive, highly regulated industry. The Society needed a business intelligence system that could extend and scale to provide relevant, timely information.

For Joanne Holgate, the SQL Server-based ALFI® solution is a good fit. It provides the right combination of an application software package designed for building societies and a customisable solution which would be easy for internal IT teams to develop and extend.

Whistlebrook

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Branch activity reporting

As a first phase, Whistlebrook implemented ALFI® to provide daily branch activity reporting. A data cube provides multiple views of sales data and is re-processed nightly so that information on branch sales is up to date as of the previous business day.

Holgate says, "We've got much better accessibility to data. We've got drill-down functionality and integration with other applications. We can look at branch sales by region, by branch and by advisor. We can analyse product maturity. Because we now get daily transactional information, our marketing teams can use it to closely monitor response to activities."

Credit risk reporting

With the Branch Activity cube providing real benefits, Skipton's MI team wanted to extend ALFI®'s capability to other areas of the business. Working collaboratively with Skipton's own SQL Server developers, Whistlebrook developed a new data cube to provide credit risk reporting for the Group Retail Credit Committee.

Simon Hindle, Management Information Manager, says, "The cube enables us, for the first time, to understand exactly, on a daily basis, where the business is up to on the lending side. We had previously relied on core reports, in CSV format, imported into Excel and then manually processed to provide results. There were lots of inconsistencies because people were using different sources and interpreting data differently."

The credit risk cube allows the Society's MI team to go into granular detail on mortgage applications. Hindle says, "We can look in detail at the movement in the mortgage book for any given month. We can look at applications, completion, redemption and performance. We can look at these by region, by loan to value band, by whether the business came through a third party, what type of loan it is, repayment method – whatever level of detail we want.

We can come in on the morning after month end, press a button and we've got those numbers. We've got far more information than we had before and we've got it on the morning we need it, rather than a week later."

Improved productivity

Although it is relatively early days, Simon Hindle has already seen some significant productivity improvements.

He says, "We've been able to use the credit risk solution to also improve our credit management reporting – looking at non-performing mortgage loans. We produce monthly MI packs for our Credit Management teams. We've been able to automate a whole week's effort down to more or less opening a dashboard. A process that took one person 35 hours is condensed down to a couple of hours at the most."

Newfound agility

The ALFI® business intelligence system is supporting Skipton Building Society as it manages changes in a fast moving market. Hindle says, "There have been a few changes internally to various accounts and it has been absolutely critical to the business that we understand, on a daily basis what the trends are within these specific accounts. Previously, this would have involved somebody within business systems writing the report, somebody else manually running it and then somebody interpreting it. With ALFI®, we can automate that whole process and put it on the dashboard so that anyone who needs the information can get it at eight o'clock in the morning. Without the new system, we would have struggled to respond quickly enough to what's going on in the market."

Flexible engagement

Throughout the project to implement ALFI® and build the branch activity reporting and credit risk cubes, Whistlebrook worked closely with Skipton Building Society's MI team.

Hindle says, "Whistlebrook clearly understand the needs of our business and are able to deliver what's wanted. They work in an incredibly flexible way. This was particularly true during development of the credit risk cube. Obviously, with what is going on in the current financial climate, we needed to be able to measure different metrics on what was happening within our business. Whistlebrook was able to take on board these changes and change direction at very short notice.

Our objectives were to get information that was accurate, timely and consistent in its format, and to get it to the right people in a relevant way. Whistlebrook's solution is enabling us to do this."

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