

CASE STUDY

From conferences to training: The FBK case



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The course introducing Business Intelligence (BI) and Data Warehouse (DWH) management originally arose from a series of lectures at several international conferences. Riding the wave of the participants' appreciation, it became a real course that, starting from zero, is directed to individuals involved in data acquisition and business decision-makers who seek to understand BI's potential.

The course starts from the very beginning, explaining how and why a DWH is useful and the value it brings to the company. Then, procedures are introduced to manage the IT Team, the work methodology defined by the Adaptive BI Framework (1) and best practices to ensure everything functions easily and efficiently. Theory is then followed by practice, leading the team to immediately apply what was learned to projects of real interest for the organization. The objective is to lead the team to an understanding of how to define a planning framework that allows the most fluid, simple and efficient DWH possible to be built.

After the course, we directed some questions to **Mr. Ivan Pasquale**, Manager of the Information Systems Unit of the Bruno Kessler Foundation.

The Foundation continues the mission of the Istituto Trentino di Cultura (Culture Institute of Trento) and is charged with keeping its territory in the mainstream of European and international research, by attracting women, men and resources at the forefront of technological development and humanities disciplines. It is also involved in bringing together natural and human sciences, a sign of recognition of the challenges faced by the knowledge society.

1. How did you come into contact with SolidQ and their training services?

Initially, we approached SolidQ with the idea of agreeing on a training plan to manage the new SQL but, after some thought, we decided to enter a sector which we were unfamiliar with in many areas but whose potential we sensed: the Business Intelligence sector.

2. What problems did you want to solve?

We decided that the fundamental area to start with was managing the Legal and Personal DWH. The Foundation's budget, which is around €35 million, earmarks approximately 85% for personnel, thus the advantages of being able to predict the costs of this item and better manage its planning would be enormous.

3. How was the Training portion conducted?

The theoretical part of the course lasted five days, after which we agreed to continue with another three days of practical activity to build a first functioning prototype together. The demo worked so well that management decided to extend the collaboration.

4. Who participated in the meetings with SolidQ's team?

The Team that participated in the classes and worked on the project was around ten people and included both technical personnel from the IT department and managers. With the initial training, we grew more and more independent and now we are continuing practically by ourselves to expand the project.

5. What goals were achieved with the training portion and with the first practical applications?

The Team that participated in the classes immediately grasped the functioning mechanisms and the demo we developed together already tangibly allowed us to analyze the personnel data free-form, without having to define the analysis paths in advance. Based on that, we could begin the work of planning and approving the budget because the Foundation depends on many sponsoring entities and it is fundamental to be able to quickly provide them with expense and cost projections.

6. Were you satisfied with the work methodology based on the Adaptive BI Framework? What particularly struck you?

It is a very effective work method that allowed us to together define the needs and goals, building the solution based on exactly what we needed. We were completely satisfied and, just a week after the course, the programmers were able to start developing the prototype completely independently. We never thought we would be independently operational in such a short time!

7. How will the work proceed from now on?

We are continuing to expand the boundaries of the areas we are focusing on.

In the first few months of 2014 a series of activities has already been planned to enter more and more details into the personnel “cube[1]” (including on budgeted and final costs, for example). Other areas that will be dealt with include travel; our researchers are always travelling around the world and focusing on this information can lead to many logistical and cost projection advantages. Further areas will then be examined, such as general accounting, and a portion of research data management: the latter will be dealt with to automate the internal system for participating in bidding procedures and assigning orders, and for the evaluation that follows every project.

Notes:

(1) **The Adaptive BI Framework** is the standard SolidQ has adopted to achieve Business Intelligence projects. It is an approach that involves engineering the technical processes, automating low value-added processes and using automatic tests before releasing the data, all by applying the Agile methodology to define, together with the client, the goals and needs to be used as a basis for planning the BI solution

(2) The term “cube” or “hypercube” refers to a structure for recording data that has been optimized for rapidly reviewing and analyzing that data. We refer to a Cube because, unlike two-dimensional spreadsheets, three or more dimensions of analysis can be taken into consideration. It is one of the technologies that SolidQ uses, together with “In-Memory” technologies, that allows free-form data analysis without the need to define analytical paths in advance.