

CASE STUDY:

Education Affiliates Turns to Mainline for Business Intelligence Solution that Identifies Substantial Savings

THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Every organization needs an end-to-end view of its operations. The challenge is how to aggregate diverse data sources to produce actionable insights.

Education Affiliates (EA) was no exception. The company, based in Baltimore, Maryland, serves 17,000 students at 55 school sites in the United States. The students attend EA schools to get real-life career training for high-demand occupations such as nursing, pharmacy, dental assisting, welding, HVAC and commercial driving. These fields can open the door to a lifetime of growth.

To better serve students, EA wanted to be able to track them throughout the student lifecycle—from the beginning of the enrollment process to when they graduated and got a job. Similarly, EA needed a full view of its business operation in order to identify opportunities and inefficiencies.

A business intelligence implementation would enable EA to target its programs more effectively; monitor and enhance service levels to achieve better student outcomes and achieve competitive differentiation; drive down costs; and plan better for the future.

But first, EA had to integrate multiple information systems and deploy a data warehouse.

THE SOLUTION

Choosing a technology partner was a critical step. EA needed an experienced technology partner who could evaluate and offer a viable solution. "When we evaluated business partners, we focused on who the resources were that that we would work with, and what their approach was to the project plan," says Kristen Anderson, business intelligence manager at Education Affiliates. "We wanted to know what type of phases they recommended. The team from Mainline really made us feel comfortable with their approach. We were undertaking both a data warehouse and business intelligence implementation concurrently, and we felt that Mainline had the best combination of a planned approach and the resources to make us successful."

The Mainline team recommended a solution based on IBM Cognos, including IBM InfoSphere Data Architect for entity-relationship modeling; IBM Cognos Data Manager to extract, transform and load; IBM Cognos Business Intelligence for dashboards, scorecards and reporting; and IBM Cognos TM1 for analytics.

EA considered other systems, but chose the IBM Cognos-based solution. "We went through a pretty rigorous review process, including demos and feedback from our IT team as well as from business users," recalls Anderson. "IBM Cognos looked more straightforward and user-friendly."

THE RESULT

Four Mainline staff engaged with EA over eight months to complete the project. The first step was to join three systems: a central database; the call center's CRM, which was VanillaSoft; and the student information system, CampusVue. "This first phase enabled us to get accurate reporting for our initial interactions with our students," says Anderson.



Customer:	Education Affiliates
Headquarters:	Baltimore, Maryland
Employees:	3,600

THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Get a 360-degree view of our operations
- Enhance student outcomes and success
- Maximize operational and marketing efficiencies
- Enhance and streamline compliance

THE SOLUTION

Mainline Business Intelligence, Data Warehouse and Analytics Services

- IBM InfoSphere Data Architect
- IBM Cognos Data Manager
- IBM Cognos Business Intelligence
- IBM Cognos TM1

THE RESULT

- Enhanced ability to monitor, manage, and optimize operation of 55 schools
- Substantial savings in annual expenses
- 50 staff days a year eliminated in preparing key compliance report
- 100% payback in less than one year, 400% payback in 2 years

Full view of student lifecycle and school performance

The solution successfully aggregated multiple data sources to provide a full view of the student lifecycle while in the EA program. The school administrators can now view real-time reports about student progress and areas that may need attention.

The analytics structure that Mainline put in place makes it simple for EA to monitor and identify specific milestones, and see how all 55 schools perform, Anderson adds. "We use the reports to reveal which schools are optimizing our results, and which schools have an opportunity to improve and better serve our students," she says. "To date, about 70 percent of schools have improved metrics by an average of 40 percent year over year."

"The BI project with Mainline has given us a better process to track and optimize spending and efficiency," Anderson says. "It's another important way to ensure that we maintain quality outcomes for our students."

Cutting expenses

In addition, EA can now see metrics broken out not just by individual school but also by program group, such as the nursing program, across multiple schools. "With the new visibility provided by the BI project, our executive team was able to identify substantial savings that we could achieve in annual expenses on the profit and loss statement, all while enhancing student outcomes," Anderson says.

Shaving 50 days a year off reporting

As a regulated entity, EA is required to monitor its compliance with multiple standards. Anderson says, "It used to take two people two to three days a month to prepare a report that now takes one person just 15 minutes to run and check."

Compliance is enhanced, and automating this report frees 50 days of staff time per year for more valuable projects. Many other kinds of manual spreadsheet analysis have been eliminated. "We can spend our time analyzing reports rather than compiling them," Anderson observes. "And we can generate reports we wouldn't have had time to compile before. The types of reports we generate have more than doubled."

EA staff can also call up ad-hoc reports without IT help. The Mainline team focused on delivering a solution design simple enough to enable self-service report generation, Anderson notes. Use of the business intelligence system is expanding rapidly. Currently, it has 50 users with plans to bring it to 500.

100 percent payback in less than one year

"We've been happy to see how excited our business users are with reporting from the BI project," Anderson says. "From the improvements enabled by financial reporting alone, I estimate we'll achieve 100 percent payback in less than one year, and 400 percent payback in two years."

Scaling easily to add value

EA is growing its business intelligence platform. "In the year since we worked with Mainline, we've been able to double the number of information sources and tables in our data warehouse on our own," Anderson says. "We appreciate the standardization Mainline built into our solution design. They made sure we use one well-defined process to update data or bring in new data from external sources. We've replicated that process many times, using the basic best practices that Mainline taught us."

Fast knowledge transfer

EA wanted assistance just with the initial implementation. "Our goal was to have Mainline get us started while we hired permanent resources for what would be a multi-year project," Anderson says. "The knowledge transfer from Mainline was great. The way they worked with us from the beginning made report development seamless. And on the data warehouse side, the training they gave our warehouse developer was quick and easy."

For more information, call your Mainline account representative or call Mainline directly at 866.490.MAIN(6246).

Mainline Information Systems is a trademark of Mainline Information Systems, Inc. © Mainline Information Systems, 2013
This document contains business information that has been developed and/or compiled by Mainline Information Systems, Inc. The information contained herein is therefore proprietary to Mainline and should not be altered, manipulated, copied, reproduced, or used for any commercial purposes without Mainline's express written permission.
All other companies, products, service names, or product names are trademarks, registered trademarks or service marks of their respective owners.