

Financial planning and consolidation

A streamlined process with the Cohelion Data Platform



Key points

Important takeaways from this case study

- Multiple international ERP and financial systems united under a single data platform
- Faster and more accurate financial and sales reports
- Accurately captured revenue targets and forecasts, made accessible across the entire business
- A Master Data Management solution facilitates agile business planning
- A business-focused data platform makes it easy to manage and monitor data quality without the need for technical input



12

Enterprise Resource Planning Systems brought under 1 roof

95%

of all revenue captured with enhanced detail

6-7 months

to deliver and configure a perfect business solution

14

daily Excel reports consolidated into one master report

1

Single Source of Truth

9+ years

of customer data easily manageable and accessible

Black Box's search for a central truth

How to unify data from multiple international sites

Black Box Network Services is a truly global company. It supplies voice communications, data infrastructure, and networking products to more than 175,000 clients worldwide. The company has been in business for over 45 years. It serves clients across all sectors and geographies. The complex web of IT and financial solutions constructed over many years is an integral part of the Black Box decision making process.

Better oversight, greater efficiency

Continued growth prompted Black Box to seek a single source of truth. The company wanted to bring together its sales and enterprise resource planning data. The product managers couldn't see sales information in real-time. The finance teams used Excel to manually input key data from 12 distinct enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems but was separate from its corresponding products.

Although they could track revenue figures, they couldn't easily link this data back to individual customers, products, or order numbers. Therefore, it was impossible for product managers to make key decisions about resource allocation. Nor could they review product performance information without the finance team first conducting a detailed reconciliation.

The ultimate goal was to unify the data from multiple international sites. Access to valuable information would make strategizing easier allowing management to make business-critical decisions at pace without first having to consolidate separate records.

Centralized Data at Black Box

Time for a new solution



"What worked in the past
does not work anymore."

Etienne Ragot
Financial Planning and Analysis Manager

It was time for a new solution to bring together the company's business-critical data in one easily accessible, up-to-date record.

A one-stop-shop for reporting

The Cohelion data platform united the sales data of the 22 international Black Box branches under one umbrella. Rather than 22 different reports, individual branches are now able to review all data on a single system. This simplified a process that had previously relied on a dozen ERP systems and the consolidation of numerous spreadsheets. Cohelion's platform also adjusts figures to reflect their local currency, greatly reducing the manual workload and making it easy to generate benchmark reports to review the performance of individual products and offices.

Pragmatic data handling

With Black Box operating across many branches, each with their own distinct systems, reporting became an intensive exercise in data reconciliation. This opened the doors to human error. With Cohelion's manual correction feature, it's now possible to make amendments to sales figures without involving a developer or IT professional. With an extensive audit trail, all corrections are captured within the system.

Transparency, Efficiency and Quality

More time to act on the data

The introduction of Cohelion's data platform has had a marked effect on the way Black Box does business. The central data location has eased financial and operational functions and promoted a higher degree of clarity.

Accurate and rapid reporting

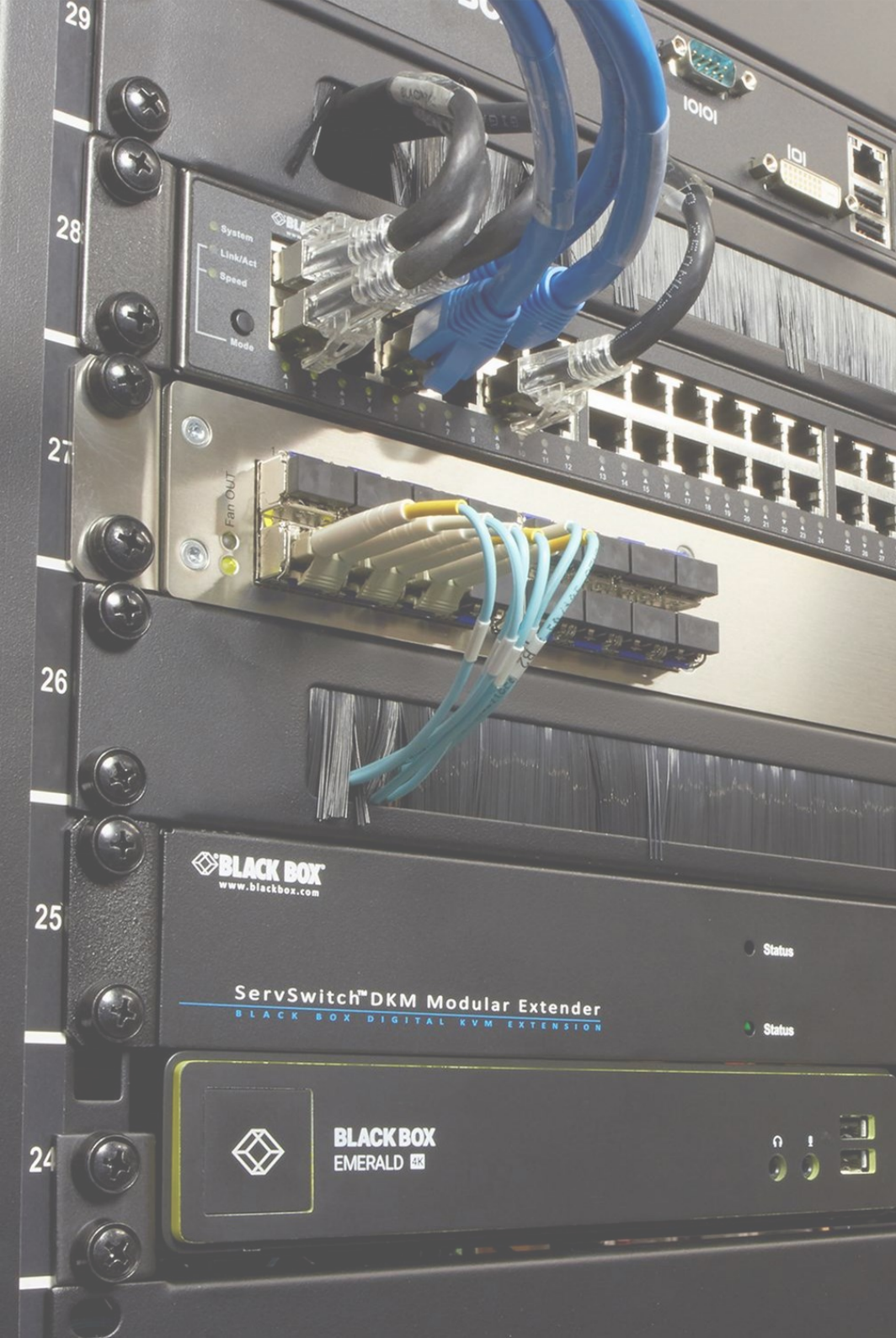
Before introducing Cohelion's platform, Black Box had very limited reporting capabilities. Now, with a single comprehensive bank of data, reports go out daily. For Black Box Financial Planning and Analysis Manager Etienne Ragot, the time saved on data consolidation is so valuable because it means his team has more time to act on the data, rather than work on the quality, accuracy, and transparency of their reporting.



"I can report the information faster, and more accurately. All the other departments can act on it."

Etienne Ragot

Financial Planning and Analysis Manager



A distinct value-add for Black Box

Cohelion's data platform made it possible for Black Box to integrate the multiple data sources that come with its decentralized model. Data is now available whenever and wherever a product is sold. Product Managers can now see more than revenue; they can also review a breakdown of all the customers, suppliers, products lines, and SKUs that have gone through the system. The platform allows the teams to create plans and forecasts for any KPI, on a customer, office, or regional level. These are not just limited to financial forecasts, but also operational and HR KPIs.

With a feed of data that tracks sales in near real-time, information is quickly relayed. This enables product managers and decision-makers to take an informed view on resource management and strategy. For International Operations Director Andre van der Wit, Cohelion's solution means that he can stay on top of the figures. He no longer has to wait until the end of a financial reporting period to adapt his strategy.



“We love to work with it ... if sales management wants to know halfway through the month, am I on track or not? And if I am not on track, I have to make noise.”

Andre van der Wit
International Operations Director



Future plans

With a single stable reporting platform in place across Black Box's European footprint, the team now hopes to integrate more data sources to inform the tracking of their KPIs.

"We need a professional solution to map customers over our different IT applications." Etienne explains. "If we really want to be a worldwide company, we need a reliable customer list with no duplicates and with a central place where customer groups, customer sectors and parent companies can be defined."

It's this granular approach to business that has seen Black Box succeed in the past. Having deployed a single source of truth designed by Cohelion, the company is well equipped to continue its success into the future.