

CASE STUDY

Packaged Application Services

Equity Residential



ABOUT EMTEC®

Emtec is the right size provider of technology-empowered business solutions for world-class organizations. Our local offices, highly-skilled associates, and global delivery capabilities ensure the accessibility and scale to align your technology solutions with your business needs. Our collective focus is to continue to build clients for life: long-term enterprise relationships that deliver rapid, meaningful, and lasting business value.

PACKAGED APPLICATION SERVICES

Emtec is a leading implementer of Packaged Applications. We help reduce costs by streamlining processes and providing application package expertise. We partner with our clients to provide subject matter expertise around the entire lifecycle of your application. Our specialty practices include, Microsoft, Oracle, PeopleSoft, Hyperion and SAP.

- ERP
- CRM
- BI



Microsoft Partner
Gold Enterprise Resource Planning
Gold Customer Relationship Management



FIRM PROFILE

Equity Residential is a national apartment management company with 3500 employees and a total market value in excess of \$17B. Led by entrepreneur Sam Zell, the company focuses on the acquisition, development and management of high quality apartment properties in top U.S. growth markets.

Started in the 1960's to manage properties near the University of Michigan, Equity Residential oversees over 119,000 units in 14 states and the District of Columbia. Listed on the NYSE starting in 1993, Equity Residential became the first apartment company in the S&P 500 in 2001 and is the largest publicly-held apartment REIT in the country.

THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

At Equity Residential, the traditional reporting structure was segregated into multiple areas across their field and corporate groups, with both operational and financial reporting sourced from various teams. Several reports and dashboards were manually created in Excel using data from Essbase and a transactional data source called MRI. This structure, coupled with reliance on manually generated reports, led to the creation of a reporting environment where data consumers often relied on “Black Market” reports (created outside the official reporting structure) to get the information they need.

The reporting environment also had ramifications on Equity's business processes. The monthly financial close, and its related follow-up meetings, took multiple days to complete as various static reports needed to be created to satisfy balance inquiries.

THE SOLUTION

Emtec advised Equity Residential on the implementation of Oracle's Business

Intelligence Enterprise Edition (OBIEE). The OBIEE platform provides intelligence and analytics from data spanning enterprise sources and applications—empowering all levels of the organization with relevant insight and information optimized for their role. The initiative represented a complete shift in how the organization worked with data – moving from static reports to a more dynamic, interactive interface.

“Access to these dynamic reports will allow our users greater flexibility and responsiveness in conducting their analyses”, said Anne Baker, Equity's AVP information Technology. “The dashboards created will provide our leadership with up-to-date views of business performance and the ability to identify trends and concerns much more quickly.”

The Emtec team worked with groups of report developers and data consumers from across the organization to define the requirements for the first evolution of a common enterprise information model. In implementing a tool that basically creates a “paradigm shift” in an organization's reporting environment (moving

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AVP Information Technology, Equity Residential

from manual, static reports to an interactive dashboard environment) it is critical to focus on not simply recreating the legacy reports used by the organization, but finding a new way to deliver the data they value most in a format that is relevant to their business.

Saad Syed, the Emtec project lead, attributes the initiative's success to the commitment of Equity's executive and business team. Saad says, "We preach the concept of establishing a Business Intelligence Competency Center (BICC) to all of our clients. In Equity's case, their executives took the initiative and formed a cross-functional implementation team. This early adoption laid the foundation for an implementation with minimal hurdles and ensured our success in creating impactful content."

Data was pulled into the BI repository from the statistical Essbase cubes and relational data sources. The aggregated financial data in the Essbase cubes was linked to detailed transaction level data in the MRI source

to create summary-to-detail drill through functionality in the financial reports.

Working closely with stakeholders, a catalog of interactive reports and dashboards was developed for the three main reporting areas: Statistical Reporting, Financial Reporting, and Operational Excellence Reporting. The dashboards generated by OBIEE deliver summary and detail-level reports along with their traditional KPIs via innovative visual formats. These easy-to-follow displays were supplemented with tabular views to provide users some traditional spreadsheet formats wherever necessary.

THE TECHNOLOGY

- **Operating System:** Microsoft Windows Server 2008
- **Database:** SQL 2008, Essbase
- **Software:** Business Intelligence Foundation Suite (BIFS) [OBIEE v 11.1.1.6.2]

RESULTS

Unified Data

Using OBIEE as a shared resource across its three main reporting areas, Equity Residential now has a singular, unified environment as a platform upon which they can build their enterprise reporting and analytics. The implementation enables a single version of truth that ensures that no matter where in the organization an analysis is performed, the data retrieved will always be the same. The result is you can confidently assign analytical roles in a decentralized format and know that your business is operating on consistent, correct information.

Operational leaders from across the country can access the reports they need through a single web console anywhere, anytime. The interactive summary and detail reports created through OBIEE gives decision-makers real-time data and the power to create new analytics from scratch or modify existing ones without any help from IT.

Efficiency at End of Month Close

The new enterprise reporting and analytics capability greatly improved the efficiency and timeliness of the month-end financial close process. Reports are now generated instantaneously by end-users. Balance inquiries no longer require multiple manual work processes and Equity has automatic drill down to account details. According to Baker, "Implementing OBIEE will give our organization a paradigm shift in its reporting strategy. With the ability to navigate, with a simple click, from aggregations down to transactional data, our users will save substantial time and effort."