

Oracle Financial and Operation Analytics: Have It Your Way

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Destination Hotels and Resorts

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Overview of Destination Hotels & Resorts:

Destination Hotels & Resorts began in 1972 with the development and management of condominium resorts. Since then, we have grown to become the country's fifth largest independent management company with more than 6,500 employees, over 7,000 guest rooms, and more than \$1.7 billion in assets under management. We are a wholly owned subsidiary of Los Angeles-based [Lowe Enterprises](#), a privately-held, national real estate organization active in commercial and hospitality property investment, management, and development. Since its inception, Lowe has been responsible for more than \$6 billion in assets nationwide.

Destination Hotels & Resorts is unique in the lodging industry in that our primary mission is to create value for guests, investors, and associates in each of our hotels and resorts. We do this by developing an innovative, customized business plan for each property we manage and combining it with the sales, marketing, and operating resources of a company many times our size. This lodging industry expertise, together with the real estate savvy of Lowe, has allowed us to bring an owner's perspective to the hotel management business.

Destination Hotels & Resorts is one of the industry's leaders in the management and marketing of [high-quality independent properties](#), many of which we successfully converted from major brand affiliations.

LE / DH&R implemented Oracle E-Business Suite in April, 2006. We have over 325 Oracle professional users and a lean IT staff of 4. One Oracle developer, one DBA and 2 Oracle support associates (1 Finance, 1 HR). DH&R captures both financial and related statistical data in the General Ledger by day using the Journal Effective Date field. Day level reporting and analysis is standard in the hospitality industry.

Reporting Challenges:

- Financial & Operational report development lifecycle was very time & resource intensive using “out of the box” tools
- IT resources were too heavily involved in the reporting process
- Business users were still using MS Excel to format final report presentations
- None of the “out of the box” tools were simple enough for business users to use for ad-hoc reporting
- Hospitality industry reporting is at the “day-level” for many of its operational reports (Actual, Forecast, Budget) and none of the “out of the box” tools reported to the day level
- Finance & Accounting business users were clamoring for a easy to use, ad-hoc reporting tool

We reviewed “out of the box” reporting applications such as FSG, Discoverer, DBI, Oracle Report, EPB, etc. and didn’t find a match for our requirements for various reasons. We tried to avoid developing a separate BI / data Warehouse solution that would be complex and costly to develop and maintain. Most companies either live with limited reporting functionality or create a BI / Data Warehouse solution that:

- Is Complex and Costly to develop and maintain
- Requires extracting data from various systems and loading it into another data store, which takes time and is normally 24 hours old
- Does not take advantage of Oracle security, requiring additional work to develop a secure access layer
- Is typically limited to summary tables and not detailed data

Requirements:

- Ease of use for business users (function / speed)
- MS Excel like front end for financial users who already have this expertise
- Ability to query or create reports by financial users with no assistance from IT
- Ability to query General Ledger balance data (at a minimum) and transactional data
- Ability to query or create reports using business terminology / metrics by financial users
- Ability to access non Oracle data bases such as ADP Payforce, ADP Timesaver, PAR/Springer-Miller, Spa Soft, Yardi, FAS, etc.
- Ability to integrate non-Oracle and Oracle data in a single report
- Ability to query from additional Oracle datasets (i.e. FA, AP, AR, CM, etc...)
- Ability to query General Ledger transactional data real-time
- Ability to drilldown
- Able to connect to Oracle data source
- Centralized installation as opposed to client installation
- Ability to support over 100+ concurrent users
- Ability to use the tool from locations across the country
- Low level of effort to manage and administer
- Minimal IT resource time to deploy and support
- Ability to leverage Oracle security profiles
- Company stability (profitability, years in business, financial backing)

In the end, we wanted to leverage the capabilities of a standard analytical tool, such as MS Excel, allowing our business users to be more self-sufficient with regard to reporting. Our highest priority requirements were “Ease of Use”, “Excel-like front end”, “Low level of effort to manage and administer” and “Minimal IT resource time to deploy and support”

Product Selection:

We created a project team, made up of a project manager, our DBA and 10 financial business users (Regional Controllers, Controllers, Business Analysts). The project timeline was 6 weeks, with a defined budget of under \$100k.

We outlined our requirements and identified five applications for the project team to review. (Oracle (Siebel Analytics), F9, GL Wand, Noetix and an In-House solution) All but one of the products were demoed using vendor sample data. Excel4Apps (GL Wand) was the only vendor that allowed us to see their product live against one of our own Oracle non-production instances. This was a very powerful presentation to not only our users, but to our DBA who found the installation against our non-production instance very clean and simple. GL Wand also covered 80-90 percent of our high priority requirements. GL Wands ease of use and overall functionality rated the highest of the five applications we reviewed.

Solution:

We chose GL Wand with an aggressive time to deploy of 1 week. If we had chosen any other product the time to deploy would have been quantified in multiple months. We chose GL Wand for the following reasons:

- Ease of use for our financial users & business analysts rated much higher than the other proposed applications
- Ability to query General Ledger data to the transaction level (drill down) in real-time
- **We were able to demo, test and develop reports within the demo environment against one of our non-production instances**
- Installation / setup of the demo environment took roughly 1 hour of our DBA's time, most of which was spent reading installation material and double checking the impact
- Small footprint on the client which amounts to an Excel Add-In
- Low level of effort to administer, deploy and support
- GL Wand leverages Oracle security profiles
- Impressed with the Excel4Apps team and their attention to understanding our business requirements
- **During the demo and analysis phase, prior to signing a contract, Excel4Apps partnered with us to develop a "Day-Level" query for both Approved and/or Posted journals. Time to develop and test the custom enhancement was roughly 3 days!**
- Zero IT resources required to develop & maintain reports!

Where are we today?

- Installed GL Wand in March 2007
- Server side application installation was done by our DBA
- Training for roughly 75 users nationwide was done by our Project Manager
 - Three 2 hour web-training sessions were held via MS Live Meeting
 - At the end of each session, attendees were sent an installation file and instructions
 - Users completed the installation and were querying for data within 10 minutes of their training session with no assistance from IT
- Currently 95+ financial and business analysts using GL Wand
- GL Wand is used primarily for ad-hoc property & portfolio reporting
 - Controllers & Business Analysts create and run their own reports
 - Finance associates create and run their own schedules
 - Regional Controllers access their portfolio data via GL Wand
- Our custom enhancement, “Day-Level” query, was rolled into the latest release (version 3.52.0)

Benefits:

- Ad-hoc reporting and analysis is quick and easy
- Time to develop, test and roll-out more robust reports, schedules, or scorecards can be quantified in minutes or hours and not days, weeks or even months!
- IT no longer involved in one-off report queries for obscure summary or detail data from the General Ledger
- Flexible & efficient report distribution methods
- Business Analysts have finally moved away from being full-time wizards at data queries, consolidation, manipulation and presentation formatting, to concentrating on actual business and data analysis!
- GL Wand has given our finance users the freedom to think outside the box and be more innovative with business performance metrics!