

# Leading Manufacturer of Wood Products Slices Data Accurately

“We have had rapid adoption of the application solution and now have a system capable of slicing data just about any way we need for instant views and deep analysis.”

*Rick Brewer, Manager of Application Development, Columbia Forest Products*

As North America’s largest manufacturer of decorative hardwood plywood and hardwood veneer, Columbia Forest Products has been supplying fabricators for nearly 60 years. The company is a leader in sustainable forestry, as well as in developing innovative and environmentally friendly technologies and products for healthy indoor living. Hardwood plywood mills and hardwood veneer mill sites are located in both the United States and Canada. Columbia maintains a strong market presence in every plywood species, core and size category, including veneer core, medium density fiberboard (MDF), combination core and particleboard core. Wood species include ash, birch, cherry, hickory, maple, red oak, alder, walnut and many others.

## Diversified customer base and complex product mix

Serving a wide range of customers with a product mix that spans the plywood and veneer spectrum, Columbia is committed to offering competitive products backed by exceptional service and support. Accomplishing this requires having the right systems in place that provide intelligent data for in-depth analysis and proper decision-making in the areas of pricing, sales, inventory and

production. Columbia found this to be a challenge and struggled to have a system capable of producing the type data they needed in a format that was usable and efficient. At first, a homegrown system was used, but this quickly proved inadequate. The company then relied on Crystal Reports as a way to assemble their business intelligence data. Coupled with other tools, this also presented limitations with a heavy dependency on leveraging a resource for writing all required reports.

After researching solution options, Columbia felt confident that the QlikView application solution offered the best features and functionality needed for extracting, displaying and reporting their business performance data. The product also offered development opportunities to fit the environment at Columbia.

## Systematic implementation plan

To move forward with QlikView, Columbia turned to the expertise of CHAMPS Analytics who reviewed Columbia’s requirements and then developed a systematic plan to implement the solution. CHAMPS helped specify hardware needs based on system demands and the expected bandwidth of user traffic. They also worked with the team of developers at Columbia to educate them

## Solution Overview

### Columbia Forest Products

North America’s largest manufacturer of decorative hardwood plywood and hardwood veneer

### Industry

Forest Products

### Challenges

Consolidating business performance data into a single location for instant review and deep-dive analysis

### Solution

Implementation of CHAMPS QlikView system to create graphical views of sales, pricing, inventory and production data

### Client Value

- Ability to perform data slices for in-depth reviews and analysis
- Up-to-date visibility into sales pipeline and customer pricing models
- Comparative analysis to view customer patterns in sales and order levels impacting mill production



on how the QlikView product works.

With approximately 50 users identified, CHAMPS created a training approach that taught the user community the key points of extracting data from the system and the type data views that were important for the Columbia business. The implementation process provided a comprehensive approach to ensuring that all training was properly performed. The approach also prepared the user community on how to use the system to meet their stated objectives of seeing company performance data in views that allowed for in-depth analysis and critical decision-making.

**Detailed analysis and macro views**

The system was set-up to address the key areas of pricing and sales data followed by inventory control. Given the deep mix of Columbia’s products and complexity of various pricing structures, it was important to configure the system in order to project data in an understandable format. This allows the generation of graphical data reports at the detailed and macro levels. The detailed reports give those in sales and production roles important performance information while the higher level views are preferred by those in executive management. Appropriate actions can be taken at any of the levels after analysis of the graphical data reports.

The QlikView system is used corporate wide by a range of users from executive

“With QlikView, we are able to consolidate multiple data sources into one location. It’s a great tool for our needs and is far superior compared to our previous methods. What we are able to do today is much more advanced than before.”

*Rick Brewer, Manager of Application Development, Columbia Forest Products*

management who often prefer high level reports to those who want to see detailed sales, cost and production data. Graphical views of sales and profitability are available for analysis on a daily basis if desired, or on a routine basis as provided each quarter. This capability equips the sales team with key data on customer performance and overall revenue generation. Reports are routinely used to analyze and review pricing details for both customers and materials costs on the production side. These important views provide the business intelligent data personnel need for making any adjustments based on shifts in customer demand or changes in production loads. The mills can look at segments pertaining to a location whereas executive management may want to view overall costs of materials at that mill from a macro level.

The QV solution allows CFP to slice data views any way they choose to review trends, study product group performance and analyze mill location production. For example, an influx of bookings at one mill may require a shift in production to accommodate the demands. The data intelligence reports enable Columbia to take necessary action based on changes in business conditions or actual orders. Comparisons of similar data can also be made across different mill locations. Pricing is much easier to manage now that they have better views of information across their product mix and how it relates to specific customers. Quarterly pricing analyses are performed to review information and customer pricing models.

Columbia already has plans in place for system use beyond sales and pricing. Expanded use will include more within inventory control and other operational areas including production. The value of the tool has been embraced by the user community and executive management is pleased with the instant snapshots the system gives them on business performance. ■



“The experience with CHAMPS has been positive from the initial system acquisition to set-up and training. They provide all the support we need whenever we need it.”

*Rick Brewer, Manager of Application Development, Columbia Forest Products*

**ROI**

- Man hour cost savings from elimination of manual reporting process
- Expedited decision-making and time savings with real-time performance visuals
- Annualized savings in payroll costs with re-allocation of resources

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