

Business Objects

Client: Anonymous

Business Size: Corporation

Industry: Personal Mobility

Country: UK

Technology: Oracle, Business Objects, SQL

Objective: To decommission Business Objects

The Brief

The project's primary objective was to decommission Business Objects. At the start of this assignment, there were 600+ scheduled production reports running, with the majority being daily, along with the 'Corporate Docs' repository, which held another 2,000+ reports. The latter area was used for end users to develop BO reports and run them on an adhoc basis.

Background

The client, a UK-based charity, is heavily involved in empowering disabled individuals, their families, and caregivers by granting them the opportunity to lease new cars, scooters, or powered wheelchairs, utilizing their disability benefits.

Business Objects allowed Users to develop their own reporting, which would be productionized and automated by IT when required. With the BO version (5.1.9) being 20 years of support, there was a need to decommission rather than upgrade, as this version was too far behind the most recent versions and would be a huge task upgrading as this would be multi-step.

Methodology

The project was in need of collaboration between IT and the user area, as replacement reports needed to be developed enabling the successful decommissioning of Business Objects. This needed to be done in a controlled manner jointly by IT Business Objects Support, IT Oracle Developers developing the new reports and the managers of the different end user departments.

Consultant Contribution

My role as sole Business Objects Support was to decommission Business Objects. End users still had the need to develop and create reports as part of their daily job functions, making this decommissioning project a moving target.

For every report, both end user and production, I secured actual report examples and extracted the generated SQL for each report, many reports generating multiple SQL due to having more than one data provider (source). These were all recorded and stored in a folder for the Oracle Developers to analyze, enabling the creation of replacement reports. As reports were replaced and signed off, I recorded so the project could be managed. These decommissioning tasks were alongside my day to day BO support, where I would investigate and resolve report queries and data issues where data was missing from reports.

Skills and Expertise

My Business Objects skills were developed at TUI where I was the Business Objects Administrator to 750+ Users. I worked on BO migrations to newer versions, where one was a major upgrade (BO XI 2 to Business Objects XI 3.1.) I solely applied system updates (fix packs and service packs), setting up and automating scheduled reports (time or event triggered), user administration, investigating and resolving data issues, enhancing the security model, liaising with SAP (support calls or via support portal) and all aspects of BO support including out of hours on-call support.

Challenges

The project was a challenge in the initial stages as end users continued to develop new reports, which I would automate and productionize as required. Replacement reports were not being developed by the Development teams in a timely manner, so Business Objects continued to be used and grow. Being a quick development application with its own environment made this easy for users to continue to use. I was responsible for promoting newer reports into the Production schedule, and migrating the older/replaced ones for audit and backout purposes.

The version of Business Objects was very old and out of support, where scheduled reports did not use the very good BO Scheduler (not installed), but were time triggered using Windows Task Manager, with reports either emailed out generally, rather than being file dropped onto servers. This required continual maintenance where distribution lists on folders needed to be amended and controlled continually.

Lessons learned

The project served as a valuable lesson in the significance of efficient collaboration with Business Objects support and IT management as controls needed to be put in place for the migration and replacement of BO reports. We needed the additional link between the end user management and the IT Oracle team that were replacing reports and BO Support.

This project ran from August 2019 to March 2022, but Motability tried to decommission for many years before, but needed the organization and project leadership in place for this migration/decommission to be performed successfully.