



Placing bets on SAS®, McKesson wins big

Stephen Buck
Vice President of Analytic Services

Industry

Healthcare Providers

Business Issue

To improve productivity and creativity on McKesson's Analytic Services team by having easy access to a single, central data repository.

Solution

SAS® Solutions OnDemand removes McKesson's data from silos, allowing the company's Analytic Services team to spend its time performing value-added analytics rather than redundant cycles preparing the data for analysis.

Benefits

Ability to improve analytics innovation and creativity makes the team more valuable to colleagues while making McKesson more valuable to its customers; the team now can prove its contribution to revenue growth.

McKesson – a healthcare company that distributes pharmaceuticals and medical supplies and sells healthcare information technologies – is winning big with SAS. Stephen Buck, Vice President of Analytic Services, heads analytics in McKesson's Pharmaceutical Division. Buck works with a team of 10 analytic professionals on marketing analysis, clinical analysis and industry analytics involving all types of reporting functions. By introducing SAS Solutions OnDemand, Analytic Services has increased productivity and creativity.

Analytic Services used to operate in silos, with team members doing individual analytics, data pulls and manipulation all in a decentralized manner. The staff would spend months preparing data extracts and prepping for analytics instead of actually performing the analytics necessary to keep the business moving forward. After a specific analytic project was completed, the team deleted all the data compiled for analysis – even if it were needed for the next project.

McKesson turned to SAS to help resolve that dilemma. By eliminating silos and putting data in a centralized place – housed securely at SAS – the necessary basics of getting started are taken care of and staff members are both more productive and focused on attacking issues and preventing problems rather than preparing for them. Analytic Services used to spend months working through cross-business units. With the SAS solution, the team spends minutes or hours doing the same type of work.

“When starting new projects, time-consuming data extraction and preparation can drain the excitement and creativity from analytic professionals,” said Buck. “SAS allows team members to start at the point at which they can truly exhibit their creativity and skills in analytical work. This translates into a higher quality of analysis than was ever dreamed possible and provides the time at the end to communicate results with impact.”

A sure thing

McKesson's Analytic Services team develops analysis to quantify a variety of insights. One example is the impact multiple enrollments in marketing and sales programs have on overall loyalty to McKesson. Without a master database to show particular pharmaceutical customers in all areas where McKesson does business, this analysis could not be done.

With SAS, McKesson has taken sales data and combined it with all of its program enrollment information to give management a clear picture of which programs, products and services are keys in driving customer loyalty. As McKesson seeks even more insight about customer loyalty, SAS provides the means to make the data ready and waiting. “There is no doubt that the solution provided by SAS Solutions OnDemand was the missing element in accelerating analytics at McKesson. SAS had us up and running in less than two months, compared to a 12-18 month time frame if we did this on our own.”

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SAS also shows McKesson the incremental value in medication therapy management. The team is analyzing drug and medical conditions to determine the right type of pharmacy-based interventions pharmacists can perform. Without the SAS platform's ability to hold and analyze this data, McKesson would not be able to develop cutting-edge medical practices and clinical protocols. Dr. Mohammed Mahboub, Director of Analytic Services at McKesson, who heads up analysis of clinical programs, puts it this way: “Our SAS centralized analytic platform empowered efficient, accurate and consistent analytics. It did so by providing everyone on the team access to the same clean, de-normalized, reliable, consistent and up-to-date data sources.”

When the team starts projects with new manufacturers or new payers, SAS provides a ready, accessible platform to store the data. “SAS has eliminated and streamlined so much for us that it makes us confident in talking with a payer or manufacturer to say, ‘No problem. If you want to send us data or we need to get data, we have a place where we can store it, protect it and organize it,’” Buck says.

That confidence gives McKesson even greater credibility in a competitive industry.

And when payers and manufacturers ask Buck which software McKesson uses for analytics, he says he never hesitates to tell them that the company uses SAS.

An information evolution

Since implementing the SAS platform, McKesson has had an information evolution. Analytic Services went from managing data in individual data stores to having a more centralized view of every piece of data in every store. Thus, SAS has enabled the team to optimize resources and, in a constantly changing industry, analysts now have the creativity to expand and innovate what they can do for the company.

Team members want to explore, create, refine and test new concepts, not start all over again by building data pulls. “If you're an artist, it's not much fun when you have to create the canvas every time you want to paint,” said Buck. “That's what my team was doing. With SAS, our jobs are more exciting because we now have the means to start analyzing as opposed to preparing to analyze.”

The financial impact is huge. While some organizations are attracted to the SAS Solutions OnDemand concept because it alleviates the need to staff an analytics team, McKesson had already made the staff

investment. Now the challenge is to always show the value of its investment. With SAS, Buck is able to demonstrate to the chief financial officer contributions to both revenue growth and expense efficiency by performing “more with the same” assets and managing the pace of growth by optimizing existing personnel.

“We are nimble in redeploying our analytics team to new and potentially more profitable ventures very quickly,” Buck says. “Because SAS facilitates quick access to additional data, we don't have to rely on outside consulting for one-time projects. And the knowledge that would leave our organization upon the conclusion of those projects now stays with us. Now, when something comes up, we say, ‘We can tackle that.’ ”

The foundation for business intelligence

As part of a discussion around McKesson's movement in business intelligence, Buck presented the company's capabilities through SAS. Buck says the response was: “You've made more progress than we have in years on the foundation of business intelligence.”

“If we had to make a bet on where we think we could be successful,” he adds, “we'll bet on SAS anytime.”



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