



Transitions Optical Inc. realizes clearer view of its market spending and finances with SAS®

Industry

Manufacturing

Business Issue

Consolidate data from disparate sources, automate data delivery for marketing model building, offer the sales force and executives a highly visual, easy-to-access portal, provide comprehensive financial data for better budgeting and forecasting.

Solution

SAS Data Integration, DataFlux®, SAS Financial Management and SAS Business Intelligence

Benefits

Time spent gathering and preparing data has dropped from six months to a single month, marketing efficiency has increased, budgeting is easier and analytical capabilities are endless.

Transitions Optical strategically markets its leading optical products and tracks its international finances with help from SAS Business Analytics. The worldwide leader in photochromic lenses has traded in its gut-feel approach and difficult-to-reconcile data for an automated, easy-to-access solution. With SAS, the company has eliminated information silos, become more efficient, and knows who its best customers are and how to target them.

For nearly 20 years, Transitions Optical has marketed Transitions® lenses that automatically adjust the level of darkness based on the amount of natural light present. Transitions Optical introduced the first commercially successful plastic photochromatic lens in 1991. The global company doesn't sell its product directly to consumers; it works with labs and lens manufacturers that produce prescription and nonprescription eyeglasses.

Before adopting SAS, Transitions Optical stored data in multiple locations, relied on homegrown applications that were becoming increasingly difficult to maintain, and struggled to consolidate financials in a manner that allowed for proper budget forecasting. The company also didn't have data clean enough to get the most from its partnership with a consulting firm that uses SAS to model marketing spending.

Moving from manual to automated

"Our finance staff did everything manually with Excel spreadsheets. Our reporting could not be detailed down to the

product levels. We have many iterations of product mixes, and they couldn't look at the various scenarios of all those product mixes," explains Maria Zabetakis, Transitions Optical's IT Director of the Americas. On the marketing side, there was too much reliance on gut feeling, and confusing streams of data. For both marketing and finance, there was no quick – or visual – way for executives to check on the information they needed. The company wanted more than a business intelligence system that reported what happened; it needed to understand what was going to happen and automate processes for efficiency.

With SAS, Transitions Optical was able to:

- Eliminate data silos.
- Clean data and introduce quality standards to keep incoming data clean and usable.
- Automate the process of data collection for marketing evaluation.
- Create highly visual executive dashboards.
- Improve ad hoc reporting and increase the ability to drill for details.
- Enhance customer segmentation.

"SAS gave us a data warehouse that could consolidate our information. It had the analytical strength for sophisticated modeling, and it had a good reporting system with graphics that can be viewed via Web-based dashboards," Zabetakis says. "SAS is the premier tool in analytics and helps us formulate

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these marketing models that are unprecedented in the industry.”

A precision approach to marketing

Transitions Optical does direct-to-consumer marketing without selling directly to consumers. It’s a tricky proposition, but critical to making sure its product isn’t just offered by optical shops (i.e., “push” marketing) but also requested by consumers (“pull”). The company wanted to understand its customers and potential customers in detail so it could better target marketing dollars. With SAS, it knows that its brand awareness is strong but also that some customers are focused on very plain offerings – while others are more open to the high-tech advances of Transitions lenses. It takes the demographic and geographic characteristics of these customers, models what types of advertising they see, and chooses print, digital marketing, and TV placement accordingly. It then measures the return on that advertisement.

Before using SAS on the data management side, the data took more than six months to organize for modeling purposes to choose the right locations for ads. Now it takes less than a month.

This has allowed the company to ask more penetrating questions and really understand which customers it should target with its marketing, and what avenues most effectively reach them.

“We can really analyze our spending on the marketing side,” Zabetakis explains.

Meanwhile, on the reporting side, information about sales activity is readily available to sales teams through dashboards that are easy to read and automatically designed to call up what the person logging in needs to see. Sales reps can also drill down to look for specific geographic or lab details. “When our solutions team is out at a client site or needing to provide information to a client, it’s all right there at their fingertips,” Zabetakis says.

A consolidated look at finances

Transitions has five plants and nine global centers that report financials separately. The company has three regional ERP systems and is owned by two parent companies. It was difficult reconciling financial data coming from so many locations – especially in a way that allows auditors and financial experts to drill back into data and for

planners to use the information for planning. “We needed to consolidate all of this and report monthly,” Zabetakis says. Now, financial reporting is faster and more reliable, the budget cycle has been shortened, and the company can undertake integrated enterprisewide planning.

Looking toward the future

Zabetakis says Transitions hasn’t tapped the full potential for SAS yet. The company plans to take SAS global and use SAS Financial Management for more extensive and detailed forecasting and budgeting. “The amount of effort that has gone into SAS and their analytics is very apparent. SAS does a very good job for Transitions Optical,” Zabetakis says.



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