Information Builders

Organization

Based in St. Louis, Missouri, Sunset Transportation offers logistics management and brokerage services, in conjunction with freight audit and payment services, to companies throughout North America.

Sunset Transportation

The Challenge

An existing Tableau environment lacked the enterprise capabilities Sunset needed to take its analytics to the next level.

The Strategy

Working with Information Builders, Sunset created a new portal, data warehouse, and ETL procedures to empower clients with self-service analytics capabilities, then deployed the new software in Amazon Web Services (AWS) Cloud.

The Results

Sunset's new cloud environment empowers clients to negotiate cost-effective contracts, monitor shipments, and select the best carriers for each engagement – while reducing infrastructure costs for Sunset.

Information Builders Solution

WebFOCUS, iWay DataMigrator, and Professional Services.

Information Builders provides the industry's most scalable software solutions for data management and analytics. With one smart platform for integration, data quality, and analytics, we help companies manage their data, generate insights, take action, and deliver impact.

WebFOCUS   **iWay Software**   **Omni**

Sunset Transportation Launches Cloud-Based Analytics Portal With WebFOCUS

Cloud Solutions Simplify Scalability and Reduce Time and Costs for Third-Party Logistics Firm

Sunset Transportation offers logistics management and brokerage services to mid-market organizations throughout the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. As a third-party logistics (3PL) company, Sunset helps clients manage shipping, freight audit, and payment processes. However, what gives the company an edge over other 3PL providers is not just its ability to efficiently move goods, but also to move the data associated with each shipment.

Sunset's new WebFOCUS portal, live in Amazon Web Services (AWS) Cloud, combines order data, in-transit tracking information, and shipping metrics into a self-service environment that empowers clients to not only understand their full transportation history, but also make real-time decisions to keep shipping costs down.

"We leverage a lot of internal and external data, and we needed a robust analytics platform that could be embedded into a larger application," says Todd Burdell, director of Business Operations at Sunset Transportation. "WebFOCUS delivers the holistic client experience we need. By mining the data with WebFOCUS, our clients can continually improve their operations and realize ongoing savings."

Sunset selected AWS to host this new analytics environment due to its proven ability to deploy and scale quickly while maximizing flexibility for the future. "With AWS, we don't have to invest in traditional hardware," Burdell adds. "And it's easy to scale the environment as usage increases."
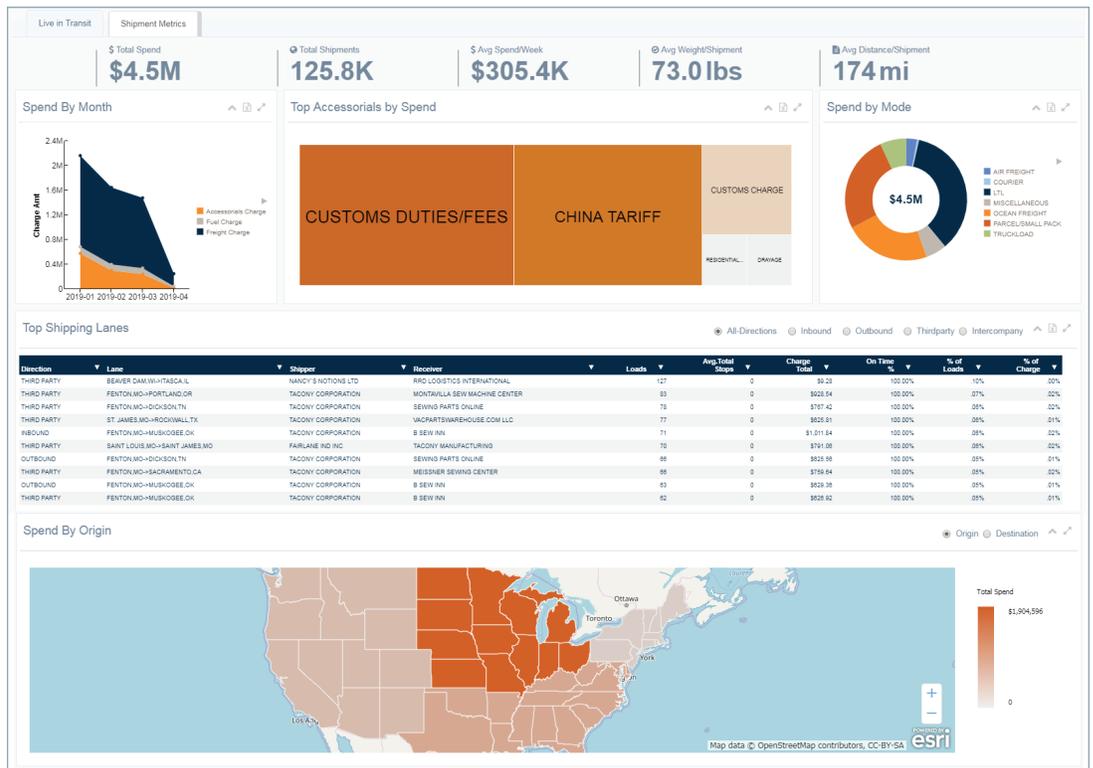
From Simple Data Visualization to Advanced Analytics

As Sunset's analytics needs expanded, Burdell and his team determined that the company's existing BI platform lacked the enterprise capabilities needed to take client analytics to the next level. "We gave our incumbent vendor the opportunity to scale their use cases, but they couldn't match the breadth of Information Builders' platform," Burdell says. "Our previous solution certainly has a place here. It generates internal revenue metrics for our operations teams. However, it doesn't have the capabilities we needed for scalable customer-facing and on-demand analytics."

Sunset also evaluated Yellowfin, Tableau, Looker, and Birst before selecting WebFOCUS as the most capable platform for developing the new portal. "WebFOCUS has advanced functionality to create our own content, establish our own designs, and visualize data with advanced metrics and charts," Burdell explains. "WebFOCUS can access and collaborate with transactional systems, messaging systems, and databases. We are accessing data directly from our Snowflake data warehouse as well as from a traditional RDBMS, and consuming external data thru RESTful APIs. WebFOCUS also features strong integration with Esri for digital mapping. In transportation, that's huge."

Using WebFOCUS, Sunset created a customer-facing portal called LOGIK that recently launched with two dashboards: **Shipment Metrics** and **Live In-Transit**.

The Shipment Metrics dashboard displays financial metrics, such as spending and volume by shipment mode. Clients can visualize real-time shipping activity, monitor origin and destination density, and review historical metrics to determine the most cost-effective lanes, including accessorial charges for freight services beyond normal pick-up, transport, and delivery.

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> **Sunset Transportation**

The Shipment Metrics dashboard allows users to toggle between spend and volume. Origin and destination density maps provide insight into top lanes.

Customer Profile

The Live In-Transit dashboard plots shipment data on an interactive map, enabling customers to monitor shipments from origin to destination. An Order Tracking and History tab lets them filter the data by direction, status, and carrier. Ad hoc analytics allow users to display shipment-level details and export their data out of the cloud database to create their own metrics. Burdell says it's all part of Sunset's philosophy of data transparency.

"Not only do we not hide data from our clients, we allow them to extract their data at a very detailed level. They can see current shipments, planned shipments, as well as their entire history with us, to make sure they are keeping their costs in line."

For example, clients can drill down to line-item details for every shipment, in every mode. It's easy to monitor location details, costs, and commodity information on detailed tracking maps.

Proactive Analytics to Expedite Shipments and Reduce Costs

According to Sarah Eggleston, director of National Sales and Product Development at Sunset Transportation, most 3PL companies offer historical metrics, but Sunset also gives clients the insight they need to select carriers in advance – a particularly valuable capability when dealing with less-than-truckload (LTL) shipments handled by FedEx, Old Dominion, Estes Express Lines, and other carriers. "Instead of retroactively revealing which carriers would have been better, our clients can now see this data in real time," she notes. "They can make the right decisions upfront and take corrective action if needed, rather than merely examining historical data."

The portal's real-time tracking capabilities enable clients to expedite delays. "It's actionable, and all the data is in one place," Eggleston continues. "Previously, customers could see how much money

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> **and Product Development**
> **Sunset Transportation**

Introducing Information Builders Cloud

Sunset Transportation deployed its WebFOCUS portal directly into AWS Cloud. Since then, Information Builders has launched its own AWS offering called Information Builders Cloud, making it extremely easy for customers to leverage WebFOCUS, iWay, Omni-Gen™, and other Information Builders products as subscription services.

According to Burdell, Sunset can use this pre-integrated cloud offering in the future, whenever it makes sense to do so. Information Builders maintains its software within the AWS environment. Customers can provision software instances on demand, and scale them at will, so it's easy to use right away.

Additionally, Information Builders Cloud supports many of the services available on AWS, including EC2, S3, Athena, Redshift, and auto-scaling. The result is a comprehensive, on-demand platform for analytics and data management that does not need to be installed, integrated, or maintain – and there is no need to engage multiple vendors.

"Information Builders has established a cloud service within AWS that is customized and optimized for running WebFOCUS and related software," Burdell notes. "We could access all the pertinent directories and files from the AWS servers very easily."

they spent, but they couldn't see what it meant to their organizations, or how they could do better. Now that data is readily at hand. They know their Sunset support team is always available, but we have also empowered them to take corrective action and get answers on their own. They can always be up to date on where their freight is."

Internally, Sunset's customer service and sales teams use the portal to view KPIs and trend history, while Sunset's Freight Audit and Payment division uses it to make sure clients are being charged according to their contracts. Two additional dashboards are in development – **Analytics** and **Financials**.

Ultimately the entire portal environment will be embedded into a larger application that includes order-entry, freight auditing, payments, and reporting services, giving clients a 360-degree view of their shipping and logistics activities. Sunset is also considering using Information Builders' Omni-Gen™ electronic data interchange (EDI) solution as a replacement for their current EDI translator tool. This would allow Sunset to process electronic transactions related to shipments, bills of lading, and load tendering, while simultaneously cleansing and enriching the data within an automated workflow.

Moving Data and Applications to the Cloud

As part of a six-week engagement, Information Builders Professional Services helped Sunset deploy a Snowflake data warehouse, and then created extract, transform, and load (ETL) processes to load transportation data, financial data, and freight audit and payment data. The consultants set up the database tables and created ETL processes with Information Builders' DataMigrator. As transactions are committed to Sunset's Microsoft SQL Server database, the data flows directly into the data warehouse as well, enabling portal users to view them almost immediately. A native Snowflake adapter ensures outstanding performance and efficiency for WebFOCUS queries.

"Information Builders did a great job of creating the ETL procedures and unifying the data," Burdell says. "In addition, Snowflake is perfect for Sunset; we don't have to throw IT resources at it, or hire a DBA to make sure the database is balanced, updated, and scaled to support a growing load."

In other words, rather than spending time planning, deploying, and maintaining database infrastructure, Burdell and his team can focus on projects that move the business forward, such as creating and enhancing the analytics portal that will increasingly differentiate the company in the years ahead. "Most of our prospects evaluate more than one 3PL as part of an RFP process," Eggleston concludes. "They often tell us what makes our solution stand out: it allows them to take action before their freight has even left the dock."

Find Out More

We can help you succeed. Talk to your local Information Builders representative to learn how. Visit us at **informationbuilders.com**, e-mail **askinfo@informationbuilders.com**, or call **(800) 969-4636** in the U.S. and Canada. To improve your skills, visit **education.ibi.com**.

Corporate Headquarters
Two Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10121-2898 (212) 736-4433; Fax (212) 967-6406