mars

MARS Rings The Changes For Virgin Mobile

"This has easily paid for itself several times over"

Are you using Microsoft Access for business?

Since using MARS to schedule and deliver Microsoft Access reports, Virgin Mobile reports invaluable benefits, including

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- Better decision-making
- Efficient stock control
- Maximizing sales
- Saving time and money

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right information

to the
right people

at the
right time

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When Virgin Mobile needed to automatically schedule reports for its busy supply chain team, it chose MARS from ChristianSteven Software.

As well as distributing standard hourly, daily and weekly reports, MARS delivers on-demand reports and forwards alerts against stock levels.

This improved decision-making has enabled Virgin Mobile to streamline its logistics operation and drive greater efficiency.

Background and Challenge

Virgin Mobile is the UK's leading mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) with more than four million customers. It was the first major consumer brand to enter the mobile marketplace when it opened for business in November 1999. In 2006 Virgin Mobile was acquired by NTL and became part of the Virgin Media group.

Karl Glover, Logistics Support Manager at Virgin Mobile, continues the story, "The UK mobile market is very competitive which means it is vital for us to have a clear picture of stock movements and levels, especially for popular and in-demand items. We operate six days a week, and receive and dispatch thousands of different items, including mobile phones, SIM cards, mobile broadband, netbooks and numerous accessories. All these items need to reach our web and telesales customers, high street retail outlets and major retail partners in a timely and efficient way."

Better Business Intelligence

In order to improve efficiency and operate more proactively the supply chain team needed a wide variety of reports, including stock level monitoring, quotes, orders, dispatched orders, inventory of parts, goods in and products shipped.

Karl continues, "It was a time-consuming and difficult task to program our ERP system to produce all the requisite reports, so we invested in Microsoft Access to extract and manipulate the data more easily."

Karl began to investigate ways to automate the scheduling and distribution of standard reports in a variety of formats and came across ChristianSteven Software MARS (Microsoft Access Report Scheduling).

"Manually creating and distributing all the reports was out of the question, it would have required a small army of administrators to send all the hourly, daily and weekly reports, as well as night shift and weekend work. So a piece of software like MARS that could do it all for us was a very attractive and cost-effective solution."

After downloading and testing the free trial version Karl realized it was exactly what they were looking for. "The software is easy to use and very intuitive. Similar products I have worked with in the past were always complex and required days of classroom training. Crucially, MARS is also extremely reliable – which is vital for our busy operation."

Solution and Benefits

MARS was initially installed on a desktop machine but, once it had proved itself, was transferred to a fully managed Windows Server, becoming an essential part of the operational systems.

Karl continues, "I am very pleased with the way that MARS has performed. It has just got on with the job of automatically distributing hourly, daily and weekly reports in PDF and Excel format. We have had few - if any - issues with it. Even though we are just scratching the surface of what we can do with MARS, I am particularly impressed by its unique event and data-driven capabilities. This has allowed us to build two great applications which have made a big difference to the business."

The first application allows users to run reports on demand simply by emailing the MARS server with their request. MARS tells them when to expect the report and then delivers it into their inbox in the required format. Karl explains, "This application was relatively easy to set up but crucially ensures our supply chain team gets the right information at the right time, allowing them to take decisive action. We can also monitor the most and least popular requests and create or retire standard reports as required."

The second application uses MARS' data-driven capabilities to generate an alert that is sent to key members of the Supply Chain team when stock levels of certain key items fall below set levels. Karl adds, "Again, this application was relatively easy to set up, but the benefit to the business is immense, ensuring we are always in a strong position to meet demand, especially for popular items. This obviously means we also get to maximize sales."

Karl continues, "ChristianSteven Software MARS has easily paid for itself several times over in the years we have been using the product. It has consistently ensured our supply chain team has the right information at the right time in order to operate efficiently, minimizing stock holding and maximizing sales by ensuring we meet demand. Plus we have saved a huge amount of money by not needing an army of administrators to simply churn out reports."

The Future

The business also started using Microsoft SQL Server and Karl is keen to develop a similar reporting environment using SQL-RD from ChristianSteven Software. He concludes, "I would not hesitate to use MARS or SQL-RD for other applications, or to recommend their use in other parts of the business. In particular I believe there is a lot of scope for utilizing the business automation capabilities of these products. This would maximize our return on investment still further.

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Find out more at:
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