

Arysta LifeScience

Crop Nutrient and Protection Company Selects Best-fit BI and BPM Solutions with TEC's Unbiased Software Evaluation Methodology

by Jane Affleck

CASE STUDY



Arysta LifeScience

Company: • Arysta LifeScience North America is one of the four global units of Arysta LifeScience.

Industry: • Arysta LifeScience develops, markets, and distributes crop nutrient and crop protection products.

Geography: • The North American business unit has locations in the United States (US), Canada, and Mexico, with global headquarters in Tokyo (Japan).

Software Requirements: • The company was seeking a business intelligence (BI) and business performance management (BPM) solution that would allow all users to access information from multiple systems across the company's six business areas.

Users: • After implementation, there will be more than 100 users across six business units, including marketing, logistics and supply chain, finance, and regulatory and compliance.

Software Selection Project Needs: • Arysta LifeScience wanted a third-party service provider to remove the subjectivity in the software evaluation, selection, and validation processes, and to minimize the time spent on these processes.

Software Selection Expert: • Arysta LifeScience sought TEC's help with the software selection process, including a best-practice methodology for prioritizing key business requirements. TEC's proprietary decision support system (DSS) was used to perform an accurate and unbiased comparison of potential vendor solutions.

Benefits: • The total software selection project was completed, with the best-match vendor and product selected within 3 months.
• Arysta LifeScience is confident it has the best-match solution for its requirements.

Multiple Business Units— and Multiple Sources of Information

Arysta LifeScience is one of the world's largest privately held crop protection and life sciences companies, with revenues of \$1.3 billion in 2008. Arysta LifeScience North America, with locations across the US, Canada, and Mexico, develops, markets, and distributes crop nutrient and crop protection products that help growers improve their yields and their bottom lines.

Arysta LifeScience North America's six business units (including marketing, logistics and supply chain, regulatory and compliance, and finance) use a number of different systems to collect and analyze information. As a consequence, there were several sources of data and information, requiring considerable effort from users to pull the information together easily and in a highly usable format. The reasons to begin the search for a new business intelligence (BI) and business performance management (BPM) solution seemed obvious: the need to eliminate widespread inefficiencies, rapidly analyze information, and improve the decision-making process.

The company realized it needed to streamline how information was gathered, in order to improve efficiency and enhance decision making by having better availability and analysis of data. Specifically, Arysta North LifeScience wanted to have better access to accurate and current market data, and be able to analyze this information—along with historical information—to better understand

trends and improve services to customers. Getting this information easily and quickly would make it possible to provide feedback that would help define the company's marketing and business strategies.

Another major concern for the company was that the new solution, once implemented, had to have a very high level of user adoption. And with more than 100 users working across Arysta LifeScience's business units, it was even more important that the new solution bring the best of all systems together in one "location"—so that all users would be able to have access to and apply information from those multiple systems.

Don Riley, Arysta LifeScience North America's head of IT, explains: "In our view, the ability to perform market analysis is linked to an investment in a software solution. Any solution must fit into a company's corporate culture and business strategy, and be used effectively by employees as they perform their tasks and accomplish the company's goals. If users find the solution difficult to use, or if they simply don't like it, the company's overall efficiency goes down."

Too Many Choices, Limited Time and Resources...

Typical of the early stages of a software selection project, Arysta LifeScience's stakeholders found they had different ideas about which enterprise software solution would best meet the company's needs. And with many of these stakeholders having past experience with their proposed solutions, it seemed possible that any one of the solutions might work out—which wasn't making it any easier to identify and definitively choose one. Also, Arysta LifeScience, as a typical small to medium business (SMB) with somewhat limited resources, needed to ensure that the selection project would be completed on time and on budget.

Fortunately, those tasked with finding a software solution didn't have to sort it all out on their own. Don Riley knew of a software selection methodology that he thought would address both the SMB resources issue and the complexity of ensuring that every stakeholder's and user's needs were met.

Riley, as the head of IT, needs to keep up on current industry trends and news, and regularly turns to the newsletters published by Technology Evaluation Center (TEC) as a reliable source of information—so he was familiar with the type of software selection services TEC offers. So when the software selection process first loomed on his horizon, he knew just what to do: visiting TEC's Web site, Riley further investigated the service options TEC offers to SMBs needing assistance with software selection.

TEC's software selection services range from self-directed research and analysis to more comprehensive offerings that can be supported by advisory services—to help companies of all sizes choose the enterprise software solutions for their needs. All selection services combine TEC's core competencies, and include access to TEC's proven decision methodology, extensive research library, decision support engine, and the relevant training and support. Depending on the particular needs and expertise of the organizations TEC serves, a flexible and unique combination of deliverables can be adopted.

“TEC's software selection methodology removed all hint of bias from the process, allowing us to find a BI/BPM solution that was an excellent match for our business requirements.”

– Don Riley, head of IT for Arysta LifeScience of North America

Cookie-cutter Approach to Software Selection Gets Custom-made Treatment

At first, Arysta LifeScience opted for a standard self-service approach. This soon evolved into a custom offering, as the company wanted to add specific functionality unique to their business that wasn't featured in TEC's BI functional and technical requirement set. To include this and other vendors in the comparison, Riley asked TEC's project manager if a request for information (RFI) could be sent and the information entered into TEC Advisor. The project manager was happy to oblige.

With the six business units each having different processes—and each requiring something a little different from a BI solution—Arysta North America also opted for involvement from the project manager and others at TEC to ensure the project went as smoothly as possible.

For one thing, TEC's project manager and subject-matter expert were deeply involved in the requirements-gathering stage of the software selection project. "TEC's project manager was very knowledgeable about the processes involved in capturing our requirements and representing those needs in the decision support system. And TEC's subject-matter expert provided the guidance we needed at all stages of the project—especially in translating our requirements to vendors' available functionality, and vice

versa," states Don Riley. "In particular, TEC's subject-matter expert brought strong advisory credibility to the table, and helped enormously during requirements gathering, as well as other stages of the project."

Working with business leaders and other users, TEC helped ensure that important processes were added to the definition of requirements—and that these requirements took their rightful place when it came time to prioritize them. "Having our own customized project evaluation center allowed us to research, identify, and assess our requirements more completely," asserts Don Riley. "And TEC's assistance ensured we found a solution that met our business requirements—and the unbiased methodology, based on accurate data, helped us create a business case to get stakeholder buy-in."

And though the Arysta LifeScience software selection team found the Evaluation Center was "a bit tricky at first," Riley explains that "TEC's project manager was there to give us tips and ensure we were able to use it effectively to maximize the time allotted to perform our comparison."

Selection by Process of Elimination—with Expert Help

The initial long list of vendors was narrowed down in three weeks to only six vendors. In another four weeks, the company arrived at its shortlist of just three vendors. Now, Arysta LifeScience had to determine which of the three would come out on top by bringing the three vendors in to perform scripted demonstrations.

For this stage of the selection process, TEC helped Arysta LifeScience in several ways. TEC used the prioritized requirements to help the company create a script for the demo that each of the three vendors would perform. Doing so helped ensure that Arysta LifeScience would select a solution that would fit its requirements and processes, rather than a solution to which it would have to readapt its processes once the solution was implemented. TEC helped Arysta LifeScience devise a method for scoring the demos. Then, TEC helped in creating summaries of demo results, which further provided consistency, objectivity, and support for the eventual choice.

The results of the vendor demos were then entered into TEC Advisor, and used to make the final decision, according to Don Riley: “the decision support tool helped us get the supportable results we needed—and in the end, it helped us determine that mid-tier vendor Bitam offered the BI solution that best fit our needs.”

Don Riley doesn’t hesitate to recommend TEC’s software selection methodology services. “Our evaluation period was shortened to 90 days. And with TEC’s step-by-step methodology and subject-matter experts, a great deal of the risk was removed from each stage of the selection process.”



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