SQL Server Reporting Services –
a Bright Solution for Premier Lighting, Inc.

PREMIER Lighting

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Angie Koch
CEO, Premier Lighting, Inc.

Since 1991 Premier Lighting, Inc. has been a leading supplier of commercial grade lighting products including: bulbs, ballasts, fixtures, lenses, recycling and energy systems. The company prides itself in offering the best products at the best price in addition to having a full-service technical support staff. They are ready to assist customers with all their lighting questions. However, their current software presented challenges because their customer orders require them to see historical purchases.

A Dim Problem Causes User Frustration

"When customers call in re-orders, they often don't know the code for the product. They will start by describing a product saying, "You know, just like the ones we got last time". In lighting there are many variables for the same product. The customer may know the wattage, but not know the Kelvin temperature," stated Angie Koch, CEO of Premier Lighting. "The customers expect we would know what they wanted, and had previously paid, by the brief description they provided. With thousands of products to choose from, this requires searching the customers' history with multiple screen look-ups."

"In many cases, as we accessed their history they would ask about a new item. This requires a different screen. Pricing is driven by individual customer volume, making pricing difficult. The new inquiry resulted in having to close the screen we were working on and switch to another part of the system. This was a frustrating, inefficient process for us and caused delays in completing orders with customers. It may only take a minute or two, but that is a minute too long with such a high call volume."

This time consuming disruption of workflow caused Premier Lighting to approach their long term automation partner, Business Automation

Specialists of Minnesota (BASM). "Angie came to us thinking she needed to completely change systems. After my discussion with Angie, we didn't find any other issues to justify the costs of such a drastic change," recalls Ryan Ketterling, Senior Sales Consultant of BASM.

SQL Server Reporting Tool Illuminates a New Way

The solution BASM found was to implement SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS), a server-based report generation software system from Microsoft. SSRS can be used to prepare and deliver a variety of interactive and printed reports. It is administered

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via a web interface and features services to support the development of custom reporting applications. BASM programmers were able to use a free version of the SQL report writing tool to pull data from Premier Lighting's non-SQL database.

"BASM was able to find and implement a solution for us in less than two weeks," stated Angie. Using multiple monitors, they keep their accounting system on one screen, and the SQL reporting tool open on the other.

"Now, when a customer calls," Angie explains, "our staff can search for the information they need in one click with the SSRS tool and drill down for details as needed; keeping their current work open. We can also answer questions on new products without having to switch from customer history to products. The history remains on one screen and

we use the other screen to suggest and explore new products on the other."

A Bright Idea Gets Better Results

According to Angie, "The SSRS tool streamlined the customer reorder process and surprised us with unexpected benefits too. Now that all of our historical data is on the SSRS database, we aren't tied to a specific software product. If we make a software change in the future, we can do it without losing our 'business critical' information or pay to have it converted. We also use the reporting tool to help with cash receipts. We can look up transactions by invoice number versus needing the "bill to" information. This saves time when clients send checks from parent companies that aren't in our system."

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In addition, the new system offers Premier Lighting the option to publish their SSRS data externally to allow remote access. This would make the data available to salespeople while they are on the road, and customers with special login credentials could see their specific order history.

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