



FOOD SERVICE GIANT CATERS TO DATA NEEDS WITH HYPERION ESSBASE

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– Garen Azoyan, Director of Finance and IS, Sodexo Asia Pacific

Sodexo Asia Pacific needed an easier, timelier way to retrieve information from its SAP financial systems. The company implemented Hyperion Essbase as the foundation for its reporting, forecasting, and planning processes. Today, managers and executives have easy access to up-to-date financial results, which can be uploaded in minutes for analysis.

About Sodexo

Founded in 1966, Sodexo Alliance is the leading global provider of food and support services. The company has more than 324,000 employees at 26,700 sites in 76 countries. During fiscal year 2005, Sodexo Alliance had sales of €11.7 billion. Listed on Euronext Paris and on the New York Stock Exchange, the company’s current market capitalization is €6.2 billion.

Getting more from SAP

With 20,000 employees and operations in nine countries, Sodexo Asia Pacific is a major subsidiary of the worldwide Sodexo Alliance group. The division’s SAP solution interfaces with purchasing and payroll systems to provide a common financial platform. But until recently, Sodexo Asia Pacific had difficulty retrieving the timely, relevant financial information it needed to analyze business performance.

“We have about 250 contracts with customers in Australia alone,” says Garen Azoyan, Director of Finance and IS, Sodexo Asia Pacific. “We needed to get more information out of our SAP system about the profitability of each contract, and about how well we are meeting the needs of our customers.”

Adding to the complexity, Sodexo Asia Pacific provides food services in nine countries across the region—representing nine currencies and languages. To compare results without performing tedious calculations, Sodexo Asia Pacific needed a way to convert currencies quickly and easily. The company began to look for a robust reporting solution that would interface easily with Sodexo’s global implementation of SAP.

Ease of use wins the day

After considering several reporting solutions, Sodexo Asia Pacific chose Hyperion Essbase. Hyperion’s support for multiple currencies and ease of use factored into the decision—as did the fact that Sodexo Alliance already used Hyperion Enterprise worldwide.

“Hyperion gave us a flexible, Excel-based front end that is very similar to the profit and loss and balance sheet that we use across the Sodexo group,” says Azoyan. “In addition, our implementation partner, Qubix, provided us with a Hyperion Essbase cube that could perform currency conversions. Sodexo Alliance now uses that cube globally in any regions that use multiple currencies. Having a partner that understood the system and could give us the right support ensured that this project would be a success.”

Sodexo Asia Pacific initially implemented Hyperion Essbase in Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. Operations managers, executive directors, and finance staff in each country are using Hyperion for reporting, consolidations, forecasting, and budgeting.

Timely reporting drives strategic decisions

Hyperion Essbase now forms the foundation of Sodexo Asia Pacific's reporting process. At the end of each month, Sodexo Asia Pacific downloads financial results from SAP to a financial data mart, then uses Hyperion Essbase to generate reports in an intuitive Excel template, and uploads reports for each country to Hyperion Enterprise. Next, Sodexo Asia Pacific consolidates regional results and sends them to Sodexo Alliance headquarters. A more efficient reporting process enables Sodexo Asia Pacific to make faster, better decisions.

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Rolling forecasts reflect reality

Using the same Hyperion Essbase cube to which it downloads monthly results, Sodexo Asia Pacific now generates rolling 12-month forecasts each quarter. Operational staff can amend the previous forecast with current actuals, and then create a new forecast. Sodexo Asia Pacific then consolidates the information in Hyperion Enterprise for distribution to Sodexo Alliance, and uses it as the basis for its annual three-year planning process.

"For each of our customer contracts, we give the operations manager access to Hyperion Essbase," explains Azoyan. "Depending on the time of year, they may see several months of actuals and several months of forecast, which serves as an initial budget. They can then overwrite the forecast with new information that better reflects the current reality of the market."

Reports in minutes, forecasts in days

Across Sodexo Asia Pacific, Hyperion Essbase is helping employees save time and increase accuracy. Instead of taking five days to consolidate performance information for each country, Sodexo Asia Pacific uses Hyperion Essbase to automate the process, running country reports in about 20 minutes. From the top level, managers can drill down to detailed profit and loss data for each contract—information that enables faster, more informed decision making.

Sodexo Asia Pacific is also saving time in its forecasting process. Using its previous solution, the company had to allow its operations staff two to three weeks to enter information manually before forecasts could be created. Today, due to the user-friendliness of Hyperion Essbase, the entire forecasting process requires only one week.

Extending the benefits across Asia

In its next phase of implementation, Sodexo Asia Pacific will deploy Hyperion Essbase in China and Hong Kong. Soon, about 150 users across Asia will realize the benefits of speedy reporting, rolling forecasts, and easy access to financial information.

"Normally, when you implement applications for your operations staff, you encounter resistance to change," concludes Azoyan. "But our staff immediately accepted Hyperion Essbase due to its ease of use. Our executive directors in each region have also responded favorably because they can get up-to-date financial information without consolidating data. Hyperion has made a huge difference in the way we look at information. If I were going to implement again, I would choose the same solution."



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