



# GRUPPO SOGEGROSS

SISTEMI DISTRIBUTIVI

## BOARD with Sogegross, “Distributing” Business Intelligence. Comprehensive decision-making support for modern distribution.

### Company

Sogegross, a business whose 2010 turnover topped 656 million Euro, traces its roots back to an ordinary corner shop in 1920's Genoa, Italy.

After opening its first Cash&Carry in 1970, Sogegross became one of the 10 largest groups in Italy's modern distribution sector within little more than 30 years.

The business is active in most regions of central and northern Italy, with over 2,300 employees, 4 brands (Sogegross, Basko, Ekom and Doro) and 5 distribution channels (Cash&Carry, Supermarkets and Superstores, Food Discount, Franchised stores and E-commerce), each with grassroots coverage. This also includes more than 260 retail outlets and an active website, [www.basko.it](http://www.basko.it).

Sogegross' management of the distribution and logistics processes that support its various brands, represent one of the Group's key strengths. Five Distribution Centres, covering more than 50,000 sqm, serve the retail stores that trade under the Group. Each has platforms dedicated to specific types of product - fresh items, fruit and vegetables, fish, meat, fresh and dry discount, grocery (packaged goods) and frozen items - moving more than 65,000 tonnes of fresh products each year as well as over 42,000,000 boxes of packaged goods.

### Progetto

“When I became the IT Manager at Sogegross”, said Gianni Ivaldi, “our existing implementation of BOARD was not giving the expected results. After a number of meetings with BOARD's technical team, we came to the conclusion that the tool was probably not

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Dott. Gianni Ivaldi  
IT Manager of Sogegross

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being used properly and therefore, we decided to take the necessary steps to change the situation. This marked the start of a new phase, during which a project that could have failed became a business-wide success. New logic was needed in order to achieve this outcome, applying an innovative and effective approach that gave due consideration to the strengths of the tool”.

“Two main steps enabled us to capitalise on the potential offered by the solution: the creation of



operational and organisational mechanisms that allow us to benefit in full from the tool's ability to match business needs with IT requirements, and the organisation of an appropriate data management environment that addresses the complexities of our business", stated Ivaldi.

From an organisational standpoint, Sogegross has spontaneously and independently created the mechanism considered best by the world's leading analysts for the management of Business Intelligence projects: the BICC (Business Intelligence Competence Centre).

"Firstly" noted Ivaldi, "we dedicated a cross-functional team to BOARD. The 'BOARD Team' is functionally coordinated by the Management Control Department and includes representatives from IT and the other business areas.

The strength of the Team lies in its ability to address the differing requirements and translate them into shared objectives.

The way that the Team is organised means that requests received from the various business functions are implemented after validation and verification by Management Control.

In addition to the undeniably beneficial effect on results, this approach also draws on the specific skills of each individual, resulting in a generalised improvement in job satisfaction.

For its part", continued Ivaldi "BOARD has shown itself to be the ideal tool for matching the needs of business users with the related IT requirements, offering the full flexibility needed to address specific business problems via the generation of ad hoc reports, while also allowing access to a single database under centralised control".

"In terms of managing Sogegross' data infrastructure, we have made best use of BOARD's characteristics without trying to use the tool to address issues that should be handled at source.

In particular, we introduced a data warehouse and reorganised our process of data management into three distinct steps:

- Staging area on the AS/400
- Data warehouse on SQL Server 2008 R2, that synchronises with the AS/400 via RTL (SQL Server Information Services)
- Presentation, data analysis and decision support via BOARD

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Dott. Davide Bruzzone  
BOARD Team Manager

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## Areas of Implementation

"Today, BOARD usage is so broad and pervasive that the only limitation is our imagination", affirmed Davide Bruzzone, BOARD Team Manager. "We use it for virtually every type of analysis, from such specifics as the monitoring of printer usage, the vehicle fleet, telephone usage and server disk space, to the development of fully-fledged applications for sales, logistics and procurement".

"Thinking about our principal projects", continued Ivaldi" and remembering that BOARD is a management tool, we decided that the logic for report generation should be standardised in order to ensure uniformity and ease of use".

The principal business areas with BOARD implementations include:

- Analysis of Sales for Cash&Carry
- Rolling forecast for Logistics and Cash&Carry
- Analysis of variances against budget for Cash&Carry
- Marketing analysis (effect of promotions on sales and margins)
- Purchasing analysis (analysis of supplier and buyer performance by area, department, product, category)
- Inventory reconciliations additional analysis is also being prepared in the following areas:
  - Returns
  - Supermarket sales
  - Annual budget with quarterly revisions

Future plans include additional activities such as:

- Transfer to BOARD of the reports currently generated by CRM Dynamics
- Integration with SharePoint for the reports currently produced using Reporting Services
- Management of the distribution centres in terms of inventory movements
- Management of all aspects of Cash&Carry's marketing department

"Sogegross' use of BOARD is very broad", stated Davide Bruzzone, "while the efficiency of IT management in terms of time and cost savings should not be underestimated.

Previously the generation of a monthly report for the Buying Office required 2 working days, while now a daily report is created in 4 seconds flat.

Furthermore, the time taken to produce weekly sales reports for management has fallen from 4 hours to just one click.

The infrastructure has also benefited, with a marked reduction in e-mail traffic and storage requirements: before, a weekly 30 Mb e-mail was sent to 40 users, now everything happens in one second".

## Hardware Infrastructure

"From a systems standpoint, I must admit that after my initial doubts, my beliefs about BOARD have changed completely." Commented Marco Staiti, Infrastructure, Security and TLC Manager for the Sogegross Group. Staiti continues, "At the start, we probably underestimated the importance of properly configuring and appropriately scaling the hardware infrastructure to meet the product's needs, but

performance really soared after the right choices were made.

Actually, as one of the world's first users of HBMP technology, we have been extremely impressed.

Alongside a major performance improvement, we have found a "generation leap" in BOARD's ability to use, in full, the available RAM, both by running processes in parallel and by the optimisation of load balancing in a multicore environment. In addition, the new technology enables us to perform hot backups, thus greatly simplifying the management of the entire production environment."

## Strengths

We are very satisfied with the product. Its main advantages", affirmed Gianni Ivaldi, IT Manager at Sogegross, "undoubtedly include: cost reductions, availability of the supplier, speed and reliability, good price-quality and cost-benefit trade-offs and collaboration and synergy".

### Cost reductions

"After getting to know the product, the cost of developing detailed reports declined by roughly 30-35%" noted Ivaldi with evident satisfaction.

"This was made possible by BOARD's self-service approach to Business Intelligence, which is truly effective.

Thanks to the creation of a BOARD Team and the autonomy achievable with just a few days of training, we were able to develop in-house all the necessary skills, while previously we were forced to rely on external suppliers with an inevitable effect on costs".

### Availability of the supplier

"One thing about BOARD that I really like, something not readily found with other suppliers, is their ungrudging willingness to help their customers. In our case, when the need arose, we received prompt answers not only from the support team, but also directly from senior management",

Ivaldi continues. "High marks are also earned by the sales team, which have always demonstrated balance, problem-solving ability and constant focus on our expressed needs".

### Speed and reliability

"The improvements achieved in the analysis of data using BOARD are truly surprising.

Using version 7.3, we can now load about 700 Gb of data in 2 hours 10 minutes and this should fall



further, to less than one hour, using the new HBMP technology.

This is an advantage in the extreme case of total system failure, since we will be able to recover all our business data in a rapid and painless manner".

#### *Good price-quality and cost-benefit trade-offs*

"Another strength of BOARD is undoubtedly its cost-benefit trade-off", affirmed Ivaldi. "Despite competitive licensing, training and maintenance costs with respect to those of leading competitors, BOARD still offers a complete range of functions that, in addition to reporting and analysis, also cover planning and control.

In addition, once 'understood and internalised' by us, the product has demonstrated a surprising ability to produce effective solutions within extremely short time frames".

#### *Collaboration and synergy*

"We have been favourably impressed by the ease with which other software houses, after appreciating the value of the solution, have worked together with us to achieve our common objectives", stated Ivaldi. "Just as an example, the BOARD world is fully integrated with MeRSy (Merchandising Retail System), Wincor Nixdorf's ERP system used by us to manage invoicing, tills, automatic re-ordering, manual re-ordering and the distribution centres.

### **LBA Consulting, a Partner at the highest level**

Migration from an unstructured information system to one that is more standardised and functional is surely a delicate moment in the life of any business.

We are well aware that, in addition to offering "classic" services such as the supply of solutions that target specific needs, very few software houses can also provide "advanced" services that include specialist advice, founded on in-depth analysis, designed to prevent the emergence over time of critical issues and incompatibilities.

"LBA Consulting has shown itself to be a partner that meets this requirement by supplying high quality and innovative solutions", affirmed Ivaldi, and also added, "I would particularly like to highlight the fact that, aware of the challenges facing them, the consultants from LBA pursued their established objectives with tenacity, detailed preparation and tireless teamwork".

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