Ironside Case Study:

Watts Water Achieves Analytics Success with Managed Services

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Powering business analytics evolution through targeted infrastructure support

Did you know there are over 326 million trillion gallons of water on Earth? Yes, you read that number right. It's hard to even fathom (no pun intended) a number that large, let alone try and quantify it into consumable, actionable business analyses. Watts Water Technologies deals with the enormity of this vast natural resource every day, improving the global community's comfort, safety, and quality of life through their industry-leading water regulation, purification, and reuse equipment solutions.

To accomplish their business goals and continue as a thought leader in their space, Watts knows they need a data and analytics environment that can keep pace with the massive scale of their operations. They also know to seek out agile, expert partners that take the burden of maintaining that environment off of their shoulders and free up internal resources to focus on what matters most: the powerful insights their rich data stores provide.

This is the story of how Ironside and Watts have joined together to build a Managed Services relationship that is enhancing Watts's analytics capabilities and redefining how they see and act on the incredible information pipeline to which they have access.

Client Background

Established in 1874, Watts Water Technologies is the premier channel partner in the plumbing industry, providing plumbing, heating, and water quality solutions for residential, industrial, municipal, and commercial purposes. Watts delivers on a global scale, supporting subsidiaries in all the major world markets.

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WATER TECHNOLOGIES

OVERVIEW

Business Challenge

Establish a centralized, standardized business analytics infrastructure that integrates global data sources and increases data efficiency, transparency, and performance.

Solution

The Ironside Managed Services team worked closely with Watts's onsite resources to install, optimize, and maintain new Cognos BI 10.2.1 and InfoSphere Information Server 11.3.1 platforms. Ironside Solution Center consultants also helped Watts to migrate key reporting assets into the new system and build a new sales dashboard for quick insights from a single location. Both Ironside teams remain engaged at Watts as advisors for and maintainers of these critical solutions.

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Watts produces a comprehensive catalog of solutions across all of the following business areas:

- Plumbing and flow control solutions
- Water quality and conditioning
- Water reuse and drainage
- HVAC
- Municipal waterworks

In terms of culture, Watts promotes an atmosphere of innovation both around the products they manufacture and the technologies they use to support those efforts. They are known as thought leaders in their space, especially in the areas of engineering and water safety.

How It Started

This journey began two years ago with Ironside's initial project at Watts. The internal IT team there was working with an aging IBM Cognos BI 8.x implementation that was reaching end-of-life support. This system was falling out of step with the company's corporate strategy of establishing a centralized global technology infrastructure that increases data efficiency and performance as part of their larger One Watts Water initiative.

To start realizing this vision, Watts recognized that they needed a partner to help them install and migrate in a timely fashion to a Cognos BI version capable of complementing a more robust information management environment. This is where Ironside came in.

Consultants from Ironside's Platform Services and Solution Center teams were the first on the ground at Watts, tasked with standing up Cognos BI 10.2.1 and bringing key reporting artifacts over to the new, optimized analytics tool. Ironside's involvement in this effort allowed Watts resources to remain responsive to and engaged with their daily business priorities while still resting assured that they would soon have access to a system fully capable of facilitating the more

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Huge increase in onsite Watts IT/analytics team's productivity through handing off maintenance to Ironside

- Data questions from other business units reduced from daily inquiries to one or two per week

- Daily average report run time for all reports reduced to around 200 seconds from previous times in the thousands

- Increased demand for Cognos BI reports across all areas of management

- Dramatic drop in external spreadsheet usage, promoting a single source of truth

- Optimized ETL process synced to Cognos outputs

- Multiple data sources integrated and streamlined by funneling through InfoSphere Information Server

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sophisticated analyses they were eager to implement.

As the installation and migration project progressed, the Watts team recognized that they had found a very special partner in Ironside, and began to discuss some wider information management goals toward which they were working.

"As with any organization starting out on a larger information management journey, we had some pretty basic goals," says Brian Johnson, Watts's Enterprise Business Intelligence Lead. "First is consistency. The data needed to be delivered on time, in the same format every time. The second goal was to increase the velocity of the data so that reporting wasn't an all-day activity. The last goal was to get the data into the right format for the person using it."

As Ironside and Watts began having these kinds of broader strategic discussions, both companies saw the opportunity for a larger partnership that could not only have a major impact on Watts's environment, but also revolutionize the way organizations think about leveraging professional services to enhance their local resources and drive substantial, agile change in what is often one of the most inflexible parts of any business: their technology infrastructure.

To meet the three goals Johnson referenced above, Watts and Ironside devised a plan that went far beyond the initial Cognos BI activities and branched out to include Ironside in Watts's deeper efforts to streamline the data management systems behind their reporting tools.

WATTS'S PRIORITIES

- **Consistency**: Deliver data on time in the same format every time. Ensure a repeatable reporting process that provides sought-after results exactly when they're needed.

- **Speed**: Increase the efficiency of the components involved in reporting so that the process no longer takes an entire day to complete. Minimize wait times with more powerful data handling solutions.

- **Usability**: Match reports delivered to the people using them. Put information in the correct format for the audience viewing it to maximize the amount of actionable insight gained.

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The Ironside Managed Services division was uniquely positioned to help Watts maximize their data and analytics potential while minimizing the time spent maintaining and troubleshooting the back-end components required to get there.
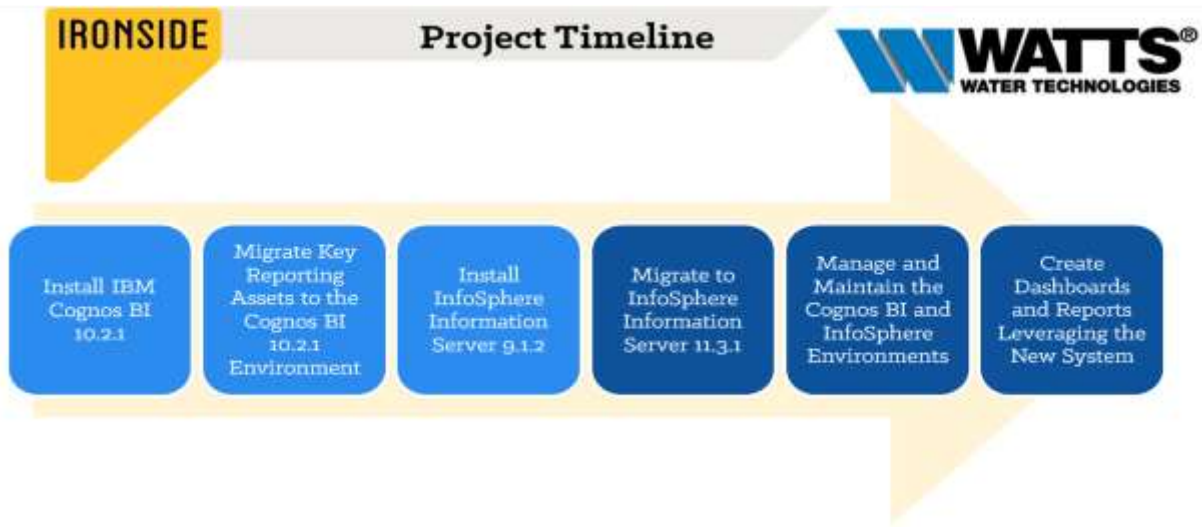
Areas of Ironside Managed Services and Solution Center engagement at Watts

Project Details

After discussing the possibilities, Watts decided to sign up for a Core Managed Services package with Ironside. Per this agreement, Ironside Managed Services took on a second initiative for Watts: the installation, integration, and management of IBM InfoSphere Information Server. This information integration platform serves as a high-powered, enterprise-level intermediary that sits between the data and analytics resources in an environment to help monitor, cleanse, transform, and deliver information for strategic business initiatives.

By tying InfoSphere into Watts's existing data sources and the new Cognos BI system, Ironside Managed Services created the foundation upon which Watts can construct their ideal business analytics practice. In fact, the high level of synchronization between InfoSphere

CORE MANAGED SERVICES

- Leverage existing infrastructure
- Monitor and maintain on-premise resources
- Add cloud services to create a hybrid infrastructure at any time
- Transition cloud resources to on-premise resources at any point

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and Cognos led to Watts expanding their agreement with Ironside six months later to include full-time management of the Cognos BI platform as well. This centralized the maintenance strategy for both systems and increased the efficiency with which changes could be enacted.

"These enterprise-class platforms provide us all of the pieces we need to have a robust, trustworthy, transparent environment for our Global Information Management," Johnson says. He firmly believes that these two assets under Ironside management will be "key components in meeting [Watts's] goals."

The first InfoSphere platform that Ironside put in place at Watts was running on version 9.1.2, which was more compatible with the other infrastructure pieces in play at the time. As the environment continued to evolve, however, Ironside Managed Services upgraded InfoSphere to version 11.3.1 as part of the greater project plan.

The upgrade to 11.3.1 increased InfoSphere's synergies with the rest of Watts's ETL processes and introduced an array of new features, including the following:

- Optimized data governance and quality
- A GUI over InfoSphere's REST API for easier access
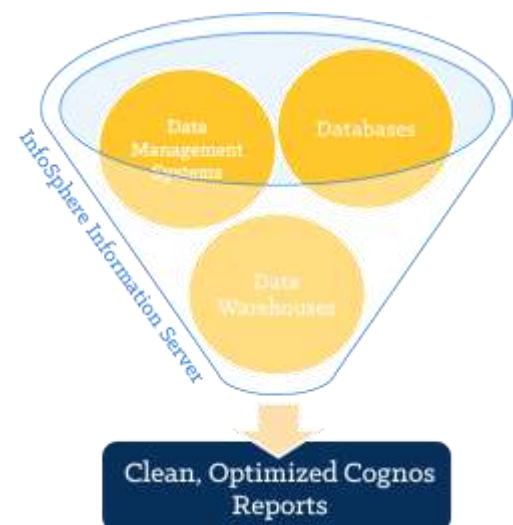- Enhanced integration with Linux, data warehousing appliances, and Cognos.

"InfoSphere 11.3.1 was already included as part of Watts's Managed Services contract with us, so it cost them nothing extra to implement," explains Erik Romanek, Ironside's Technology Services Manager. "Even better, it was highly impactful because it helped resolve specific issues that they were experiencing as roadblocks to their big picture ETL solution."

In addition to the InfoSphere update, Ironside Managed Services team members have already worked on several enhancements to the new Cognos BI system at Watts as well. When Fix Pack 5 for Cognos BI 10.2.1 was released, the Managed Services team applied it and had it

RECOGNITION

To get a deeper view into what Ironside Managed Services can accomplish, please feel free to explore the award nomination we recently received from IBM on the Ironside website. It highlights how our Managed Services experts built out a groundbreaking, never-before-seen application of a Netezza data warehouse in the cloud to support the analysis needs of one of our top clients.

View the article here

InfoSphere Information Server

Data Management Systems · Databases · Data Warehouses

Clean, Optimized Cognos Reports

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fully integrated into Watts's platform within a week. They also performed troubleshooting exercises to remedy performance issues occurring in Cognos Workspace Advanced and made sure that users accessing Cognos through that studio had an optimal experience.

Just as the Ironside Managed Services team continues to oversee the Cognos BI- and InfoSphere-related parts of Watts's environment, the Ironside Solution Center is also still involved on the reporting side. Solution Center consultants are working with the Watts team to design an intuitive, consumable sales dashboard that reflects global sales, product, and customer information in a single location.

Built against a cube for high-speed delivery, Watts stakeholders will leverage the dashboard to greatly reduce the time to value of their sales data and boost the speed with which they can act on that data. The dashboard divides different information types into the sections below for easy navigation:

- A **home page** with a summarized/combined view of the different information categories grounds the viewer in the most important facts to absorb from the report.
- **Tabs** for sales, customer, and product details that encourage users to dive deeper into their specific area of interest. To further maximize self-service, each tab can be filtered on different business channels and time periods to zoom in on the specifics relevant to the current viewer.

"For the most part this dashboard is meant to reduce the number of reports that Watts users are checking regularly," states Aimee Carvalho, the Ironside Technical Consultant spearheading the report's development, "but there are also multiple benefits built in here. This format helps Watts's technical team get employees in other areas paying attention to how they input data and to what they can accomplish with high data quality. It also helps to improve productivity because they have a one-stop shop where they can figure out what they need to do in a shorter time than usual because it's all centralized."

BI ADMINISTRATION

If you'd like some more insights into the expectations the Ironside Managed Services team has for a Cognos BI environment and want some tips on what Cognos admins should be looking for, download our recorded webinar "What to Expect for your Cognos Environment." During this session, Erik Romanek, Ironside's Technology Services Manager, details how a properly configured Cognos environment should behave and provides some tips and tricks for making any necessary improvements to your installation.

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– Brian Johnson, Enterprise Business Intelligence Lead, Watts Water

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Results

Watts has already seen some major benefits from their decisions to bolster and refine their approach to data and analytics. These have come in several forms, the first being in the three areas of focus Watts articulated at the project's outset. Brian Johnson has been tracking these success metrics throughout, and is enthusiastic about what he has recorded so far.

"We've seen measurable impact in all three of the goals we set," Johnson says. "Data questions that were asked of my team on a daily basis have now dropped to one or two questions a week. Reporting has dropped from a daily average run time of thousands of seconds to a daily average run time for all reports of about 200 seconds. The last goal about getting [information] into the right format I see in two places. The first is that requests for Cognos have increased across all areas of management, and secondly I am seeing a dramatic drop in spreadsheet usage in some subject areas."

On top of these strong results in other areas, Johnson and his team have seen positive changes occurring in their department as well since delegating the responsibility for InfoSphere and Cognos BI to Ironside resources.

"By handing off the platform management for Cognos and InfoSphere we have seen a huge increase in productivity," states Johnson. "Issues that used to take hours and hours out of our development cycles have been minimized. I attribute this to two factors. The first is the proactive care and feeding that [Ironside has] given to these systems. When the systems are taken care of we see much lower incidences of support. The second factor is that with the addition of Ironside we now have a much larger knowledge base and by leveraging that we have been able to tackle root causes of problems instead of just fixing symptoms. By fixing root causes we minimize future support, which is critically important."

PARTNERSHIP

The highest priority in any of Ironside's Managed Services and Solution Center engagements is being a good partner to our clients. We want to advise and collaborate, not prescribe and dictate. To get more insight into this philosophy and understand how Ironside resources interact with partners like Watts, take a look at Erik Romanek's guide to building effective Managed Services relationships.

View the article here

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These tangible improvements support the worthiness of these projects and Watts's partnership with Ironside from a financial and operational perspective, but for Johnson the results and the relationship go deeper than that. He also sees great value in something more intangible and personal that the Ironside team provides: trust.

"The most valuable thing to me about partnering with Ironside is trust," Johnson asserts. "I trust Ironside and I know without hesitation that they have my back. It doesn't matter what challenge I am facing; they will bring resources to bear to work with me. There are lots of places that can supply staff and knowledge; there are very few that can supply trust."

Future Directions

Watts now has a solid foundation in place upon which to continue expanding their analytics and information management efforts. The results so far are sparking off a groundswell of fervent support for the projects being conducted across many departments. Conversations are beginning around what the next stages will be, and what Ironside's role as a partner and advisor will be as Watts's approach becomes more refined.

For the time being, Ironside will remain in position, managing Watts's InfoSphere and Cognos platforms and working through report development cycles hand in hand with Watts internal resources. As new possibilities unfold, Ironside will continue to provide Watts with recommended next best actions and engage in any way possible to ensure success.

On Watts's end, Johnson believes that both his team and the company as a whole are off to a great start with their strategy. "I wouldn't change a thing," he says. "The approach we have taken has worked marvelously well. We relied on Ironside to help us as we began to crawl and then walk. I'm sure as we get ready to run they will be more than able to keep pace."

"There are lots of places that can supply staff and knowledge; there are very few that can supply **trust**.*"*

LEARN MORE

For more information on Watts Water Technologies, their products, and their corporate goals, please visit their [website](#). If you would like to know more about Ironside's Managed Services offerings and how they can help your business's data and analytics journey, download the department's service brief.

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About Ironside

At Ironside, we dive deep into clients' core business challenges, emerging with new insights into how to leverage the power of business analytics to help move companies further and faster toward their goals.

We align our expertise in business intelligence, performance management, predictive analytics, information management, big data, and more to clients' business challenges, helping them break through to new ways of looking at their place in their industry and the world.

Interested in learning more? Contact us.

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