

Customer Success Story

Solutions for SAP data in Microsoft Power BI with Marshall Trailers



Summary

It has never been more important for businesses to make data-driven decisions to remain competitive. As a growing, forward-thinking company, Marshall Trailers recognises this and has recently approached Absoft to request bespoke reporting. Absoft successfully delivered a suite of reports to Marshall Trailers, allowing them to see custom views of their SAP S/4HANA data relevant to their business.

The Challenge

Marshall Trailers have been a customer of Absoft's since the beginning of their SAP journey, after Absoft implemented SAP S/4HANA a few years ago. Being an agricultural manufacturer, they approached Absoft to request bespoke reporting that would reflect the specific operations of their business.

There were 7 reports required, ranging from Sales Order Analysis, through to Factory Performance. Originally, the reports were planned to be built in SAP Fiori apps. However, it became apparent that we could optimise much of the build effort by making the reports in Microsoft Power BI instead.

As a partner with expertise in both SAP and Microsoft, Absoft were able to offer a combined approach. This saw our team creating custom data views in SAP, which would then be modelled and visualised in Microsoft Power BI.

What the client say:



"We have worked with Absoft's consultants to achieve interactive reports that give us great insight into our daily operations.

By using Power BI, we are no longer having to look up data across multiple screens in SAP, but are seeing everything we need at a glance."

Charles Marshall,
Marshall Trailers' MD

The Solution

Marshall Trailers were already a Microsoft 365 customer, therefore it was straightforward to add the Power BI product to their existing portfolio. The 7 reports were delivered over 2 phases, with 4 reports delivered in the first phase and 3 in the second.

Our team at Absoft worked together with Marshall to spec the reports, in order to capture everything that was required in each one. Then we established how best to get the required data from SAP to Power BI.

- **CDS views in S/4HANA**

- Core Data Service views chosen as the most effective method**

After assessing different methods and options, it was decided to utilise the wide suite of CDS (Core Data Service) views available in SAP S/4HANA, combined with Absoft's expertise in developing custom CDSs, to get the required data into the reports. This was chosen as the most effective method, as it cost the least in terms of licencing, and meant that Marshall Trailers could access the data directly from SAP, without having to invest in a separate data warehouse.

SAP S/4HANA has a large number of built in CDS views, which each give a specific list of data, covering a range of fields in SAP. They are categorised by business area and allow you to see your data in an easily-identifiable format, as the CDSs show field names as they appear in the SAP front end screens, as opposed to back end table names.

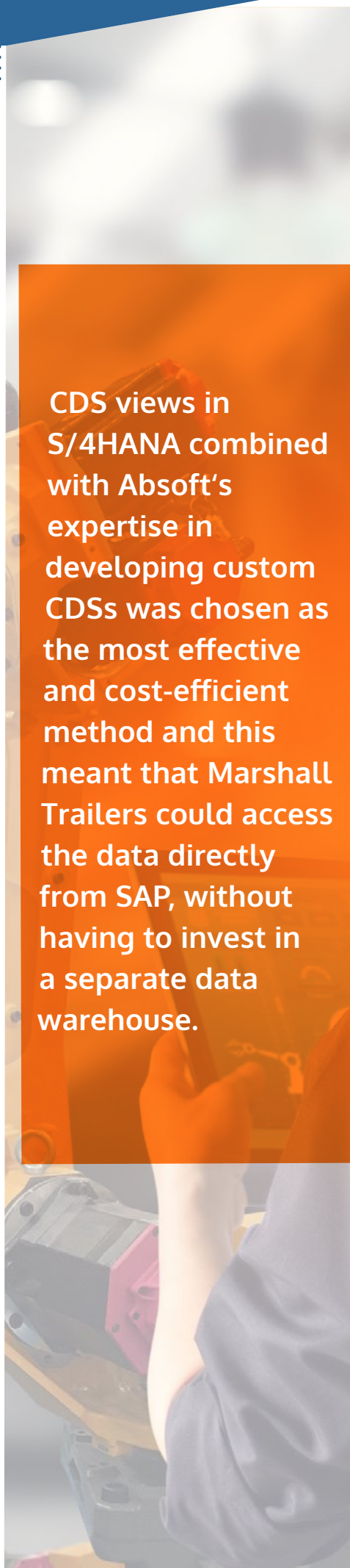
The CDS views can all be accessed through Power BI via the oData service connector. A number of these existing CDS views were identified as containing the fields for the information Marshall Trailers wished to report on, and therefore were incorporated into the data model.

- **Custom CDS views in S/4HANA**

- For data visualisation of specific fields required in the reports**

It was also found that there were specific fields from SAP required in the reports that were not included in the existing CDS views - for these instances, Absoft was able to create custom CDS views in S/4HANA that could then be added to the data model. This enabled us to give Marshall every view of data they required, regardless of whether it currently existed in SAP, or not.

Once the data model was designed, the data was transformed as per Marshall Trailers' requirements.



CDS views in S/4HANA combined with Absoft's expertise in developing custom CDSs was chosen as the most effective and cost-efficient method and this meant that Marshall Trailers could access the data directly from SAP, without having to invest in a separate data warehouse.

Marshall Trailers had outlined the calculations and figures they wished to see in the reports and Absoft were able to achieve these either in the CDS development stage, or in Power BI itself, using DAX and Power Query expertise to transform the data and carry out complex calculations. The result was a comprehensive, yet efficient, data model which was optimised for analysis and reporting in the final stage.

Absoft worked with Marshall Trailers to establish the best report visualisation for each part of the analysis, and as a result, Marshall took advantage of a number of different charts to display data in their reports.

A particularly useful feature was that of Maps in Power BI which was used to allow Marshall Trailers to have an at-a-glance look at order delivery locations, and customer-supplier contact locations, quickly and easily.

The matrix visual was also used in a Factory Performance report, where a large amount of information was required to be displayed in an easy to digest format - the matrix visual enhances the basic table visual to allow this.

The Result

Each report was designed with Marshall's branding in mind, and each report was created in a similar fashion to ensure consistency throughout. Absoft successfully delivered the reports to Marshalls, and each one is in daily use at the company.

"Throughout the project, we worked collaboratively to decide on how to best represent our data in the report. We really appreciated Absoft's expertise in recommending the best approaches for our needs. Absoft have continued to work alongside us to provide support for Power BI and provide any tweaks or new functionality that we may require."

Charles Marshall, Marshall Trailers' MD

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Marshall 

Established nearly 70 years ago, Marshall Trailers has built an international reputation for producing the highest quality agricultural machinery.

Pass an agricultural trailer or container on the road, or on farming land and there's a good chance that it is a Marshall product.

As the family-owned business has expanded to include a third generation, the past five years have heralded significant change within the company. Their customer base is growing and the product line has evolved and increased with a range which has a new look, is of superior quality and is easier to manufacture.

ABS^oFT

A UK based leading SAP consultancy, SAP and Microsoft Gold Partner, committed to transforming our customers' business processes and financial well-being.

With three decades of SAP experience Absoft takes pride in partnering with our customers through the years to ensure we provide the very best, innovative and cost-effective solutions to meet the ever changing challenges of a fast paced business world.