

TimeTrends Helps Compaq Leverage the Web to Improve Forecasting Accuracy and Efficiency



"Of the five forecasting products we evaluated, TimeTrends offered us the best value for our money. It satisfied all our criteria and provided exceptional performance, intuitiveness, and versatility. Plus, even after we customized it with additional functionality to suit our particular needs, it was still better priced than the other products we looked at."

Robert King
Forecasting Manager
Compaq

Compaq Computer Corporation, a Fortune Global 100 company, is a leading global provider of technology and solutions. Compaq Direct, the company's direct fulfillment organization provides end-to-end order management capabilities and complex configuration solutions to clients throughout the United States and around the globe.

Compaq's Direct organization provides Compaq customers over 300 industry leading products, custom and bulk assembly of computer systems, management of customer-specific inventory and over \$5 Billion in available inventory to meet customers' day to day or long term requirements. From shipping a single desktop system, to assistance with a custom global rollout, Compaq has the capacity and capability to manufacture and ship a single unit or tens of thousands of units per day.

Recently, Compaq's Direct organization selected ALT-C to provide the TimeTrends forecasting system. The software

is innovative and provides the organization with up-to-date tools to manage its inventory, manufacturing and procurement.

A new forecasting solution in a Microsoft format with support for SQL server, and perhaps more importantly, one that was web-enabled was required. Robert King, Forecasting Manager at Compaq explains why, "We're an extremely large organization who's in business to assemble Compaq computers to customers' specifications. We have three call centers located in Indiana, California and Nebraska, with approximately 600 to 800 customer service (known as client service) personnel. Each client service personnel is a potential user of the TimeTrends tool. These people are assigned to specific, large accounts and are in contact with the customer and sales people every day. It stands to reason that they're the ones who are best qualified to forecast the needs of specific customers. That's why it was imperative that the forecasting solution we implement be web-enabled so these forecasts

can be done by our teams in the field."

Compaq evaluated five different forecasting products before choosing the TimeTrends Forecasting System by Montreal-based ALT-C Systems Inc. The System includes the TimeTrends Forecast Warehouse, an optional TimeTrends e-Forecasting module as well as an optional Promotions module. "The TimeTrends tool is extremely versatile and well priced," recalls King. "It provided the SQL Server support and web-enablement we wanted, plus it integrated well with our ERP system.

We also had no problems in requesting and having additional functionality built into the system to accommodate our unique processes. As an overall package, TimeTrends not only satisfied all our requirements, but it also provided the best value for our money."

The TimeTrends Forecasting System was specifically built from the ground up to be a customizable solution that would allow each individual company to create a tailored forecasting and planning process that would fit its particular business requirements. This flexibility enabled Compaq to very easily add whatever functionality it required in order to customize the system to fit precisely with its business

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processes. In addition, TimeTrends was easily integrated into the company's existing management system through the use of an industry standard Open Database Connectivity (ODBC) interface. If required, TimeTrends is also extendable into areas such as Safety Stock, DRP, Collaborative forecasting and S&OP.

TimeTrends has enabled the Compaq Direct client services teams—regardless of their geographical location—to use the web to initiate and enter forecasts based on their customer's specific needs. These forecasts are then collected by King and forwarded to Compaq for fulfillment. The tool is also generating web-enabled reports that are being used by the client service teams as well as upper management across the country. "Our teams can go up on the same web page, isolate and pull up reports specific to their customer so they can see how accurate their forecast has been over the past month. They can, for instance, compare what they've forecasted versus what TimeTrends has forecasted. This helps them tremendously for the next time they need to forecast."

King is equally impressed by TimeTrends' intuitiveness. "With TimeTrends, even if our sales people don't know what to enter, the system prompts them with recommendations," said King. "This has been very helpful considering the size of our organization and the varying degrees of experience with forecasting." Featuring an industry-standard, intuitive GUI, coupled by a high degree of flexibility, TimeTrends also enables users to choose the level of control and management of statistical methods and parameters they are most comfortable with—from complete automation to full manual control for the more experienced users.

In addition to off the shelf products, Compaq often assembles specific components based on customer requests. TimeTrends enables King to easily flag those SKUs that need to go to the company's manufacturing center for production. "We can run a report for our manufacturing site that a specified number of SKUs will be coming through. This helps manufacturing to plan and staff accordingly.

King concludes that the benefits of using the TimeTrends Forecasting System are equally felt in purchasing. Based on the reports generated and made available to this department, they are able to see, for instance, the exact amount of product being requested by certain customers. With this information, the purchasing department is able to foresee demand, which helps them to better control inventory, and significantly reduce back orders.

In closing, John Frasca, VP of Supply Chain Management at Compaq's Direct organization, observes that "TimeTrends has been shown to significantly improve the communication of customer material demands throughout the organization's supply chain, resulting in decreased inventory levels as well as shortened order to delivery cycle times."



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