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# Sun World Uses Analytics To Shine

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With the help of a dedicated VAR and a sophisticated analytics solution, fruit farmer Sun World International has implemented smarter farming practices and transformed its business. It's just one more example of how solution providers everywhere are using technology to make ours a smarter planet.

Applied Analytix, an integrator based in Belmont, Calif., has been working with Sun World for more than a decade. The food grower is no stranger to [analytics](#), which it's been using for basic financial analysis and reporting for a while now. But Sun World recently opened the door to more intelligent farming and increased profits by harnessing the immense power of a full-blown analytics system that allows it to analyze crop yields, farm labor costs, water usage, growing patterns, and a broad range of sales and distribution processes. As a result, the midsize produce company no longer has to rely on manual systems and wait for weeks or months for the data it needs to adjust its practices. Instead, Sun World gets super-fast insight into what's working and not working in its business, and decision-makers can tweak their plans accordingly.

"Before, we didn't know until 30 days after the month how our harvest costs were trending," said Steve Greenwood, director of budgets and reporting for Sun World, in a press release. "By that time, it was too late to start financial planning because the crops had already been harvested. We've turned raw data into business insight, improved our order fill rates, and gone from being a reactive company to a proactive company."

Using the analytics system, [Sun World has analyzed and measured](#) all kinds of farming data, including irrigation methods, crop types, and water usage, which has declined 8.5% since 2006. The company has reduced labor costs by up to 15% and realized an 8% efficiency increase in farm labor by analyzing man-hours and allocating resources where and when they're needed. Sun World is also using analytics to optimize its sales planning processes. As a result, key segments of the grower's customer base increased by more than 20% last year, generating more than \$3 million in new business.

Applied Analytix's work with Sun World falls under IBM's [Smarter Planet](#) initiative. Robin Stevens, director of consulting services at the VAR, says it's helping companies across the gamut -- from finance and agriculture to retail and biotechnology -- to work smarter and more efficiently by unlocking their information reservoirs.

In Sun World's case, the basic analytics system was already installed. But the company needed more; specifically, it needed additional database connections. "Open Database Connectivity [ODBC] was key," Stevens says. "This is what allows all different databases to exchange information in one format. It's transparent to the user." Stevens explains that, with ODBC, information "silos" -- ERP transaction solutions and individual database management systems, for example -- can communicate with each other, thus unleashing a free flow of data for measurement and analysis.

"ERP systems have been in place since the 1970s and '80s," Stevens says. "So companies have had endless amounts of data for a long time, but they haven't known what to do with it all. They try dumping it into Excel, having different people look at it. But everyone is analyzing it differently, and these companies are being overwhelmed by information."

It's not hard to figure out why the solution provider's customer base is so diverse: Everyone has data to be analyzed; every company has to measure and analyze its performance. About 80% of the VAR's customers are SMBs, businesses with annual revenue of \$100 million to \$500 million, Stevens says. "The SMBs are a lot of fun to work with," she adds. "They're scrappy and flexible. They're doing what they have to do to survive and grow."

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