Background

AstraZeneca is a significant player in the pharmaceutical industry. Between existing products and new product candidates, referred to as emerging brands, they have well over thirty offerings in the market. Independent teams, referred to as brand teams, manage each major product or groups of minor products. The brand teams are responsible for developing the strategic plans for defending their products in the market and gaining market share. Although the teams are independent, they still need to communicate their plans and have them reviewed to ensure the teams are meeting the executive directives. The requirement that the plans be communicated to Executive Management surfaced the need for format and content consistency. Plainly, a viable product strategic plan needs to have minimum requirements for format, content, and quality. AstraZeneca needed some way of ensuring the brand teams were addressing all areas involved in the marketing of a product. They needed to be able to integrate information from many other internal sources to produce correct plans and reduce the workload of the planning process on the brand teams. Also, they wanted to compare and contrast the plans of many products in a consolidated form. In short, they needed a facility to act as a hub. It needed to pull information from various sources as well as the brand team's plans, and to make all of this information available to Executive Management in a condensed form.

Solution

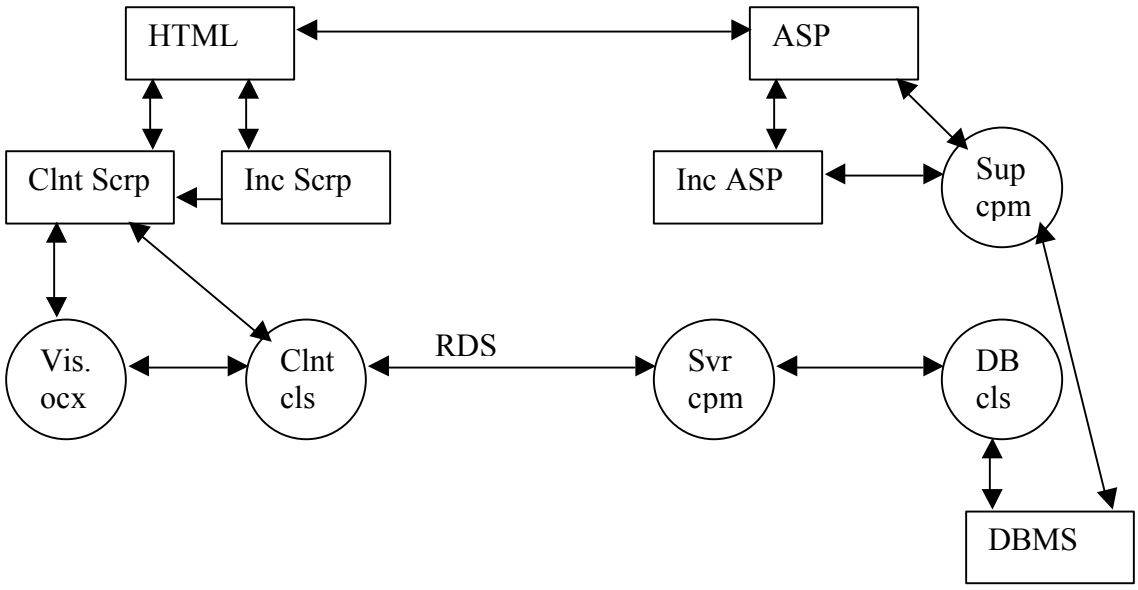
Early on, the brand teams attempted to utilize Word templates and Excel spreadsheets. Business Information Systems made an attempt to address the needs and a small ASP page based computer system was built. Although important in the understanding of the challenge, these attempts could not even approach the type of system that AstraZeneca needed. In 2002 a team was assembled to build the first fully functional strategic planning system.

The new system, known as the Product Strategic Planning System (PSP), took into account the complex needs of the planning process. The original solution attempts had shown the brand teams how quick Excel and Word could be; consequently, the teams requested a system that featured entry facilities similar to but more controlled than their old tools. Some of the business highlights of the new PSP included:

1. Key data feeds from internal systems such as the short term forecasting system were created.
2. The planning work product was divided into its main categories of information. Each of these categories had their own entry facility. Planning information about everything from competitors and market differentiations to objectives and tactical actions were collected. Long-range forecasting information, operational

headcount information, and many other types of data were collected and assembled by the system.
3. A browser based Intranet interface that did not resubmit for storage and retrieval of the plan data was created.
4. A Word style input control for free-form explanations that had the ability to be managed by the software was created.
5. An Excel style input control for table style entries that had the ability to be managed by the software was created.
6. A facility to include attachments in the plan was created.
7. Reports that supported the working team as well as those for Executive Management were created.
8. Scenario based planning that allowed for unlimited contingent plans was included.

General Application Architecture



Further Releases

The successful results of this release reinforced AstraZeneca's commitment to the strategic planning project. As a result, in 2003 two events took place. First, new modules were added to the project, thus the project was refocused from a mere planning tool into a valuable software suite. Second, the project gained international attention.

The new international focus required that the software support the differences in the planning requirements of over nine AstraZeneca marketing companies in eleven countries. The solution was to make the software configurable based on user profiles. Although the software was made available around the globe, it was hosted by a single server instance in the United States. As each of the over seven hundred users used the software, it changed its behavior to fit that user's needs.

Some of the new modules added to the software included:

1. Detailed tactical action planning with assigned resources and status updating
2. More elaborate long-term forecasting facilities
3. More elaborate competitor and differentiation information
4. Expanded short-term forecasting entries
5. High-level operational planning
6. Portfolio prioritization planning
7. Transmission of US PSP information to the UK
8. Active Directory integrated role based security with field level granularity and user tuning
9. International Profile Support
10. Enhanced reporting

Conclusion

To quote Jennifer Klein, Business Planning Director and project sponsor, in a May 2004 interview conducted by SC Carbone, Inc., "The value of the planning tools is immense. The organization is starting to see the effects of active planning." Klein went on to talk about how Executive Management can now see one comparative report that contains the plan summaries for all the key products, and how AstraZeneca will have significant positive effects to its revenue from the planning suite. As for the big question of how much of an effect will be seen on AstrasZeneca's revenue, Klein's confident answer was in the form of a question, "What's the value of having a complete and thought out plan?" Truly, the answer is different for each company. What would it mean to a company to have one more product out before its competition, to fend off threats to a failing product launch, or to discover a market differentiator that enables it to penetrate the share determining market segment? In the pharmaceutical industry, to quote David R. Brennan, President and CEO of AstraZeneca US, "success is measured in billions."