

ABN Amro accelerates with APS and Miramo

Dutch-based international firm ABN Amro Asset Management has radically improved the timely and accurate publishing of performance data in marketing materials to support its sales staff, thanks to Interlagos APS and Miramo.

Regular and timely publication of fund performance data and asset base is key to the marketing program for most commercial asset management institutions, but achieving it can be a challenge. The in-house marketing team at ABN Amro's Asset Management division were finding it difficult to meet sales staff's requirements for up-to-date printed performance data in marketing materials. Marketing copywriter Bela Spanjar explains:

"Documents were prepared by an in-house DTP team of two. Although it only took half a day to actually produce a new leaflet or an hour or two to update graphs and figures, they were extremely busy and we had trouble getting the updates ready within the requested timescales."

The two-sided leaflets consist of marketing text on the front, with a performance graph, assets under management and sales information on the back. A fair proportion of the content is static or only updated once or twice a year but the requirement for checking and correcting the updated figures and graphs could mean two or more back-and-forth trips between marketing and the DTP department before a document could be signed off. As a result, only some 10 to 15 fund performance leaflets were produced – although ABN Amro Asset Management administers over 600 funds altogether – and these were mostly updated

"The time-saving benefit is huge; our in-house design team would never have been able to update all the leaflets we're now producing."

once or twice a year at the request of sales staff. Best-selling funds might have their documents updated every three months, but that was the effective maximum frequency.

More information, more often, in more languages

With more than 60 key funds that required up-to-date information on a regular basis, some of them needing multiple versions to reflect different share classes, it was necessary to seek a different route to streamline marketing document production. In addition to speeding up production, it was a requirement that any new system should be able to support multiple languages with minimal additional input as there was a growing need for documents in French, German and Italian in addition to the Dutch and English versions already being produced. Any new system also needed to be able to handle the requirements for different variable and fixed text within each language in order to prepare documents for different target audiences from the same data.

Since APS developer Interlagos was already in discussion with other departments at ABN Amro Asset Management, it was quickly able to arrange a proof-of-concept demonstration using APS and Miramo to compose documents automatically, using pre-defined templates and user-selected content.

A six-week development and implementation period followed, during which time an initial two or three document templates were designed to match ABN Amro Asset Management's corporate style, which was undergoing a revamp at that point. As the style was defined the templates were revised as necessary, both to match the evolving style and to address typesetting and composition challenges such as the lengthy titles made necessary by some of the fund names.

"At the beginning, the system underwent quite a number of changes," comments Bela Spanjar, "The team at Interlagos used their experience with other clients to help us, providing solutions and pointing out ways to improve the system."

The first production tests with the APS

PROFILE

ABN AMRO Asset Management

ABN Amro is a prominent international bank whose history dates back to 1824. Its asset management division operates from more than 20 locations around the world and manages nearly 200 billion Euro of assets for private investors and institutional clients.

In-house production of marketing materials based on asset performance was slow and restricted the number of publications that could be produced.

With APS and Miramo, dozens of performance documents can be created each month by marketing staff largely automatically, increasing sales support and reducing the burden on the in-house design facility.

solution began in mid-January 2006 and by early March the system was in full operation after some revisions to expand the number of options available. It has been in continuous use since then, producing around 110 leaflets every month from seven templates, representing around 50 to 60 funds with English and Dutch language versions. As of December 2006, French, Italian and German versions were being added to this.

The production process is very simple and imposes no burden on the in-house DTP facility at all as the APS solution can be operated entirely by marketing personnel. Numerical data on fund performance and funds under management from internal systems are gathered in Excel files which are combined into ZIP files and then uploaded to APS. The correct template is chosen and new figures automatically flow in.

Text and sales information has to be entered manually but this part of the content is relatively static, requiring only periodic updating, if ABN Amro Asset Management's fee structure changes, for example. Bullet point text, data fields and benchmark data are all checked and then up to 20 leaflets for a specific language or audience can be updated instantly by APS, to be further checked as necessary and revised or forwarded for general use.

Ready in days

In addition to vastly expanding the number of leaflets produced, the timeliness has improved dramatically, as Bela Spanjar explains:

"The performance data arrives in the first week after month-end. We review it all, update and check the documents over the next two or three days, so everything is done by about the tenth working day."

This means the sales force get documents that are only a week behind the availability of the raw data itself. Bela Spanjar gauges the success of the project by the lack of additional demands and absence of complaints about document timeliness – "If you don't hear anything, that's good news," she says.

The leaflets are initially produced as PDFs for use on ABN Amro Asset Management's internal network and publicly via its Web site so that readers can download and print them as required. Occasionally there's a need for high quality printed versions, which are produced internally via an in-plant print facility with both offset and digital presses. To support this requirement, Interlagos developed templates designed for high-resolution CMYK or spot color print output with the necessary crop marks and other information and graphical elements necessary for this type of printing.

ABN AMRO Funds - Absolute Return Bond Fund	
Insertion date:	18 January 2006
Domicile:	Luxembourg
Share class:	A
Currency:	EUR
Minimum investment:	EUR 250
Management fee:	1.0%
Service fee:	0.15% (as per 1 April 2006)
ISIN:	LU0205275113
Bloomberg:	ABNRBSA LX

Quick and very easy

Summing up the switch to APS, Bela Spanjar says, "The time-saving benefit is huge; our in-house design team would never have been able to update all the leaflets that we're now producing. We can have all the leaflets updated in one day if necessary, uploaded to a database and available to the sales force. The sales people don't have to ask for updates any more, they know that everything they need will be available for them right after month-end.

"The system is very easy to use," she continues, "so it allows our DTP department to spend more of their time on other things, keeping more work in-house. If we spot a typo or other mistake, we don't have to wait until they have time to fix it, we can edit the text or correct graphs and assets ourselves."

Looking ahead, as well as implementing further language versions, Spanjar and her colleagues plan to analyze document usage to fine-tune the use of APS to produce the most effective mix of publications to support the sales effort.

The leaflets produced via APS and Miramo include a mixture of standardised descriptive text, titling and images (left, top), plus latest fund performance and asset data (left, below). Graphs are generated automatically from the numerical data; entire documents can be generated in seconds.

Miramo®

ABN Amro Asset Management
De Entrée 99-197, PO Box 283
(AP0410), 1000 EA Amsterdam,
Netherlands
www.asset.abnamro.com

Interlagos Ltd
Tel: +44 (0)20 8763 8801
www.interlagos.co.uk

Datazone Ltd
Tel: +353 64 66 28964
Fax: +353 64 66 28965
www.miramo.com

© Datazone 2007