



Eclipse Scientific Group Builds an Integrated Laboratory Information System Using Oracle Tools and Explorer Consultancy

Partner Profile



Explorer (UK) Ltd
Leeds, UK

<http://www.explor.co.uk>

Explorer (UK) Ltd, an Oracle Certified Solution Partner, is a value-added reseller specialising in selling and supporting high-quality technical computer software. Explorer focuses on building long-term relationships with its clients, matching innovative but realistic software solutions with clients' individual requirements, and providing development, implementation and consultancy support.

In the project with Eclipse, Explorer provided and installed the Oracle software, and provided project kick-start, ongoing development assistance, and knowledge-transfer.

Customer Profile



ECLIPSE
SCIENTIFIC GROUP
*Analysis and Consultancy
at its best*

"In the first week we found that the support burden had gone down; the system is much more stable than our existing platforms. The level of data integrity we expected from Oracle has also been delivered." - Andrew James, IT Manager, Eclipse Scientific Group, Cambridgeshire

Eclipse Seeks Industry-Standard Package

Eclipse Scientific Group uses a laboratory information system to register incoming samples and testing requirements, process test results, report back to the customer, and handle invoicing.

For several years Eclipse used Oracle Forms 3, Oracle Database 7, and a lab information system supplied by Fraser Williams. However, at the end of 2000 the Fraser Williams product was de-supported, prompting Eclipse to seek a new system. Andrew James, Eclipse's IT manager, explained: "We were operating several different systems across nine UK and Ireland sites that each had its own database, so it was hard to provide reliable management reporting. We wanted to bring everything together, reduce in-house support costs, and have an industry-standard package supported by a vendor."

In August 2001 Eclipse upgraded to Oracle8i Database and began to implement a commercial lab information package called Sapphire. However, it became apparent that the required functionality, flexibility, and performance were not being achieved, and that Sapphire didn't support many of the Oracle features Eclipse was used to, such as multiple-user viewing.

Eclipse approached Explorer (UK) Ltd, who suggested that the required robustness and flexibility could be achieved using Oracle Forms/Reports deployed on a dedicated Forms/Reports server. Explorer also recommended Oracle Portal, to give external users filtered access to information.

High-Level Project Goals

- Reduce in-house support costs
- Replace disparate systems with a single, integrated system
- Increase the overall performance and functionality of the lab information system

Why Oracle?

"We were familiar with Oracle and were keen to use our existing in-house skills. We also wanted a rapid application-development front-end, and in time Oracle Forms/Reports will enable us to run applications through a browser without client-side software."

Paul Fielder of Explorer added: "Eclipse recognised that Oracle provides the highest-performance database with true scalability and resilience."

Eclipse Scientific Group

Chatteris, Cambridgeshire

<http://www.esglabs.co.uk>

Eclipse Scientific Group is one of Europe's leading independent laboratories. The company offers expert consultancy and high-quality chemical, microbiological and analytical research and testing services. Customers include the food, pharmaceutical, environmental, water, agrochemical and animal-feed industries.

Industry

Laboratory testing and consultancy

Company Size

250

Key Benefits

- Faster and more accurate reporting
- Increased accessibility to data for clients
- In-house ownership of the lab information system

Oracle Products & Services

- Oracle8i (Enterprise Edition)
- Oracle Internet Development Suite
- Oracle Forms
- Oracle Reports
- Oracle ReportsPortal

Why Explorer?

Eclipse had purchased Oracle applications and consultancy services from Explorer in the past. James said: "We were very happy with everything we'd received from them, and they were the obvious choice when we needed help after Sapphire failed us."

Instant Reporting for Customers and Staff

The first phase of the project began in July 2002. First the database was redesigned using recently developed data structures, followed by a three-month period developing the forms and database functionality to sit atop the agreed data model. "With the assistance of Explorer and our own committed team, we made incredibly fast progress. Using Oracle tools and an Oracle database it was very easy to prototype forms for users and get feedback."

The new system runs on a Compaq server and uses Oracle8i on Unixware, deploying to client PCs using Windows 2000 terminal services as the thin client.

The new lab information system successfully went live at the Chatteris head office on 21 October 2002. Roll-out across all of Eclipse's sites will be completed by April 2003, providing total integration across the company. Oracle Portal, currently under development at Eclipse, will also go live early in 2003.

James said: "Performance is vastly improved in terms of speed of entering data into the system, and speed of queries. Reporting is now an instant process - before, because we had several systems to be interrogated, it took hours. At the click of a button we can now view details such as the number of tests per department, and the value of work."

"Exceptions-handling is another extremely strong feature of the system, and is of great benefit to our customers. Customers can also perform trend analyses of their results. They've been very impressed."

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The chief satisfaction lies in the fact that Eclipse now has in place a platform for growing the company: "The improved efficiency will allow us to increase volumes without necessarily increasing staff numbers. Development doesn't end in April 2003; rather, by then we'll have an integrated platform in place to go on developing the system for the future."

Future Plans

In 2003 Eclipse will concentrate on developing the area of portals, and consider the automation of lab processes and the provision of interfaces between lab instruments and the main system.

"Explorer first introduced us to Oracle Portal, which is now so critical to where we are going, and we'll continue to use Explorer explicitly to keep us up to date with Oracle technology."

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