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# INSIGHT

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## *Abt Associates Strengthens its*

# Reporting and Information Delivery Platform

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Abt Associates, based in Cambridge, Mass., is one of the largest government and business research firms in the world. The company applies scientific research and technical assistance expertise to a wide range of social, economic and technological policy issues, international development, clinical trials and registries, and complex business problems. Founded in 1965, Abt Associates provides services to U.S. federal, state and local governments, foreign governments, international organizations, foundations, and business and industry. Its staff of over 1,000 is located in offices in Cambridge, Mass.; Bethesda, Md.; Chicago, Ill.; and overseas in Africa, Asia, Latin America

and the Middle East. One of their latest international projects is working to strengthen the healthcare system in Iraq.

Abt Associates' employees devote their energy and creativity to performing research and consulting that improves the quality of life and economic well being of people worldwide. Their clients depend on Abt Associates' findings and recommendations to help them make better decisions and deliver more effective products and services. To generate recommendations that lives literally depend upon, Abt Associates' highly educated employees apply rigorous analytical techniques and painstaking procedures on a daily basis. As a result,

they recognize efficiency and effectiveness when they see it.

Imagine the quandary, then, when Abt Associates went live on Oracle Applications and were unable to access the project information they had grown accustomed to receiving from their prior home-grown system. The ERP system they believed would improve their world was viewed as a major disappointment.

In April 2002, Abt Associates implemented the Oracle 11i Applications suite, including Oracle Projects. Initially, they developed a variety of custom reports and trained their end users in Project Status Inquiry and Expenditure Inquiry to provide project users with up-to-date financial

information related to projects. While standard Oracle queries and custom reports provided a rudimentary level of financial data, they were cumbersome to use and did not replicate reports provided by the legacy system, let alone open up the new world of information that the project-driven company had expected.

“When we did our Oracle implementation, we got killed by our project users because we went live without a powerful, user-friendly inquiry and reporting application,” said Susan Schwab, Abt Associates CIO. “We had a reporting system pre-Oracle, and even though we set expectations correctly, our project directors were *really* unhappy to have lost it when we went live with Oracle. The result was that our entire Oracle implementation was viewed by users as a terrible decision.”

“I knew that Oracle Projects was actually superior to our prior system, and was impressed by its horsepower,” said M.J. Jensen, director of executive and area systems for Abt Associates. “I was confident that all the information we needed was in the system – the challenge was accessing it in a flexible, intuitive manner without degrading the performance of our transactional server.”

Jensen then conducted a five-month evaluation of potential reporting solutions, in accordance with demanding government contractor criteria. Abt Associates selected Project Partners™ Project Information Center™ (PIC) solution because the Half Moon Bay, Calif., vendor had demonstrated a

thorough understanding of the firm’s business requirements and the intricacies of Oracle Projects, and PIC met not only their immediate reporting requirements, but also their long-term goal for an information delivery platform supporting additional reporting needs across various systems. They rolled out PIC to several hundred users in the fall of 2003, and it was an immediate and enormous success.

One factor that led to easy adoption by users was PIC’s intuitive, Web-based interface, requiring 30 minutes or less of training. Depending on a user’s role – be it corporate, business, project or financial manager – he or she can obtain reports related to complex project financial information including aging, booking, backlog, performance, profitability, unbilled and billability/utilization.

Because PIC provides flexibility for creating hierarchies and summarizations at various levels, users can view summarized cross-project information or access details at the project, task or

transaction level. For example, business managers can see receivables aging at the organization level and then drill down by customer or project manager. Users can also report across multiple operating units or currency based on Oracle Applications implementation setups.

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The insight Abt Associates gained via PIC has been highly praised, and resulted in broad acceptance of the Oracle Applications implementation. “Project Partners’ PIC really changed our users’ perceptions of the entire Oracle project,” says Schwab. “Reporting is really important and PIC filled this need very well.”

## **Abt Associates’ Results**

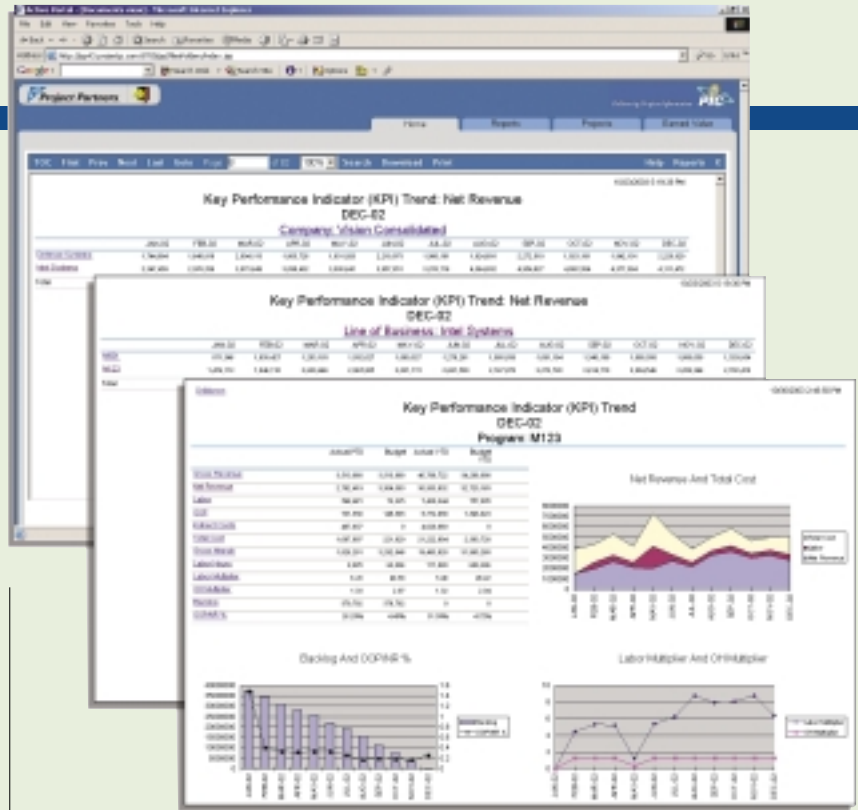
*In addition to non-quantifiable business improvements, Abt Associates conservatively estimates that Project Partners’ Project Information Center will deliver the following cost savings:*

<b>Contract Review and Prep</b>	<b>\$ 432,000</b>
<b>Indirect Costs and P&amp;L at Various Org Levels</b>	<b>\$ 77,000</b>
<b>Area Management Report Prep and Review</b>	<b>\$ 38,900</b>
<b>Time to Reconcile GL to PA</b>	<b>\$ 25,500</b>
<b>Cost Savings Over Three Years</b>	<b>\$ 550,000</b>

The Project Partners' solution is credited with helping their customer improve business performance. PIC provides Abt Associates with 90,000 pages of reports, each with six or seven hotlinks with drilldown data, every week. "Our managers are able to use this actionable information within eight hours of weekly closing. Because we now have answers to previously unanswered questions, better management is possible," says Jensen. "Visibility of information is highlighting opportunities for process renovations. We've recently identified and righted several issues which prior to the PIC roll-out would not have been caught for months." Abt Associates is now receiving the kind of world-class insight they regularly deliver to their own clients.

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In the future, Abt Associates will use Project Partners' Project Information Center, as other PIC customers do, as its "reporting and information delivery platform for the future," says Jensen. A single PIC report can integrate and present information from multiple sources including packaged applications like Oracle, legacy apps, data warehouses, XML and ODBC data sources, desktop applications and flat files. PIC provides native connectivity to popular databases like Oracle, SQL Server, Sybase and Progress, in addition to



ODBC/JDBC connectivity. The PIC server also supports access to Enterprise Java Bean, CORBA, COM or C++ objects.

### About Project Partners, LLC

Project Partners, LLC, began as an expert consulting firm serving project-centric businesses worldwide, and now additionally delivers products that extend enterprise project management solutions provided by Oracle, Primavera and others. Project Partners is staffed by some of the original Oracle Projects developers, support specialists and consultants, and enjoys a uniquely close relationship with Oracle, providing feedback into development cycles, participating in beta tests and leading special interest group training sessions. The firm's employees use their extensive background in project-driven industries to help their customers achieve competitive advantage through enterprise project management.

In addition to expert consulting

*Project Partners' Project Information Center provides intuitive browser-based drilldown of financial data or key performance indicators, from corporate to subtask level. Especially helpful are extensive reports available at intermediate levels, such as Line of Business or Program. Information can be displayed in spreadsheet or graphical formats and can provide a snapshot at any point in time.*

services and the Project Information Center product, Project Partners delivers two other products. Project Loader™ imports projects, work breakdown structures, budgets, agreements, fundings, percent complete and earned value information into Oracle Projects from external systems. OP3™ integrates projects, work breakdown structures, resources, budgets, earned value and actuals between Primavera Enterprise™, Primavera Teampay™ and Oracle Projects.

More information about Project Partners is available at [www.projectp.com](http://www.projectp.com) or by calling +1 650.712.6200. ☎