



Success Story



Midcontinent Communications provides cable television, local and long-distance telephone service, and high-speed Internet access to customers in more than 200 communities in western Minnesota, northern Nebraska, and North and South Dakota.

Business Challenges

- Multiple versions of the data existing in Access databases and Excel spreadsheets
- Continual disagreement about whose number is right
- Patchwork system could not scale with the business

Business Value

- Single version of the truth
- Deep understanding of the business metrics
- Robust and scalable reporting environment
- Additional reporting modules can be quickly added
- Accurate and consistent data as of midnight the night before

Gaining Control over Spreadsheets

Dealing with a multitude of user-created Access® databases and Excel® spreadsheets was no easy task for Midcontinent. Data was being misrepresented and was difficult to support when any changes upstream were made. Scorecard Systems was able to help Midcontinent reach agreement on metric definitions and implement a solution for producing accurate data, relieving the user's need to recreate their own marts.

Midcontinent Communications was suffering from a common problem — old legacy data was being extracted from the operational systems and stored in a reporting database without much transformation or optimization.

While fortunate to be dealing with only one billing system, it still was not meeting users' needs. The users were taking the data back out of the database and creating their own reporting with Access and Excel.

"Without a solid and dependable reporting solution, our users were struggling to get the information they needed on a timely basis. Plus, our current reporting system was growing by one request at a time, resulting in a patchwork solution," says Larry Parsons, Director of MIS for Midcontinent.

With the reporting database growing haphazardly and with so many users resorting to different work-arounds, data was being misinterpreted or even becoming corrupted along the way. Users began to argue about who had the right number.

Also, as upstream systems or data changed, the impact to all of these various user solutions could not be assessed. It was taking more and more resources just to keep up with the demand, and the MIS team decided it was time to take a different tactic.

Midcontinent discovered Scorecard Systems. They had heard that the folks at Scorecard have deep industry experience in telecom data and subscriber-based metrics.

After the initial discussions with Scorecard, they developed a plan to address the data issues and multiple end-user solutions. In order to demonstrate success and early buy-in, the teams agreed on a 90-day first deliverable. As a part of any implementation, Scorecard begins by hosting a workshop to drive out business rule and metric definitions, leveraging their experience at dozens of carriers.

"We had a design session that lasted about three days. Everyone came in having a different idea about how the metrics should be defined and left the

session with agreement on common definitions. Our COO and CTO served as tie-breakers when we could not reach agreement on our own," says Parsons.

Dimensions and measures were new concepts for Midcontinent. It took some training to get their minds around how they worked and how to model them. Scorecard took the time necessary to ensure the team fully understood how the new system would work.

The more the team learned, the more they tried to expand the scope. But, Scorecard brought them back into focus, ensuring the first milestones were met. Scorecard knew the importance of a timely and successful first deliverable.

The MIS team worked well with the Scorecard team, building data extracts while Scorecard implemented their Subscriber Analysis Application. In only 90 days, the first module was launched with subscriber metrics. The subscriber report templates provided by Scorecard allowed Midcontinent to be successful right away.

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LARRY PARSONS, DIRECTOR OF MIS

In order to provide some existing quality data, Midcontinent reran one year's worth of history. In just 30 more days, the second module with revenue and usage data was launched. "We're now developing a work order module to measure the activity of our field service reps," says Parsons.

Today, users can get access to the count of subscribers by all of the various dimensions as of midnight, the night before. Most of the users access Scorecard's web-based reporting tool and subscriber reports, though some of the power users go directly to the OLAP cubes.

Going through this process with Scorecard, the team learned a lot about subscriber-based metrics at very detailed levels. They feel they now have a deeper understanding of what "churn" is all about, not just for subscribers, but for services, features and bundles. Overall, Scorecard has helped them to better know their business.

Midcontinent's executive team appreciates that the data



now reconciles. In fact, they claim that if the number did not come through Scorecard's Subscriber Analysis Application, the number is not valid. The users too, enjoy accurate and consistent numbers and are able to spend their time doing analysis instead of balancing reports.

Parsons says that the biggest gain was sitting down with all of the different departments and reaching agreement on all of our subscriber metrics. Getting the definitions and business rules defined ahead of time was the key to success. Scorecard helped us work through all of the possible customer activity exceptions. It was through that exercise that the team realized how complex the telecom data and subscriber activities were."

The Midcontinent team thinks that it may have been possible to do this on their own eventually, but knew it would have taken considerably more time and resources and they would have subjected users to a lot of trial and error, while missing out on industry best-practice rules and metrics.

The Midcontinent team is very pleased with what was delivered. For others embarking on a project like this, Parsons offers this bit of advice, "Start with your best design going in and know that there will be changes you will want to make down the road."

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About Scorecard Systems

Scorecard Systems is the leader in reporting and analysis solutions for telecommunications companies, and has been helping telecom companies produce accurate subscriber metrics since 1996. Scorecard supports landline and wireless carriers, cable, satellite, broadband, and internet providers around the globe.