Transforming ERP Reporting:
From Legacy to Sustained Innovation

Kingspan™

»» Simplement™

Customer Kingspan Insulated Panels
Organization Size 2500+ employees
Industry Manufacturing
Region Europe, Africa, Asia Pacific
Products Data Liberator, Roundhouse, SmartStarts

Company Background

Kingspan Group, the global leader in high-performance insulation and building envelope solutions for the construction market, is organized into five operating divisions. One of these, Kingspan Insulated Panels (KIP), is divided into three geographical regions. With 2500+ employees, the EAA (Europe, Africa and Asia Pacific) division has 65 sites and is also the original division of Kingspan with roots going back as far as 1965.

Business Needs

"We needed real-time, quality data from a robust and reliable reporting platform that would also enable us to do sophisticated dashboarding and analytics. The availability of Simplement's next-gen offering set the stage for us to adopt an optimal solution for long-term viability,"
says Kevin Lacey, Head of Systems Solutions, KIP EAA.

Kingspan Insulated Panels & Simplement Collaboration

Kingspan Insulated Panels excels in producing advanced building materials for a better world and leverages digital transformation to enhance business performance. The company makes such strides by cultivating forward-thinking and future-proofing initiatives, and a culture of continuous improvement. The collaboration between Kingspan Insulated Panels and Simplement to transform ERP reporting represents a crucial step in modernization. By adopting the Simplement Roundhouse platform, Kingspan Insulated Panels has achieved real-time capture of and access to high-quality data combined with seamless connectivity to Microsoft Power BI and mobile devices. The evolution has yielded significant improvements and lasting benefits in decision-making, productivity, efficiency, and innovation.

Overcoming Barriers for Long-Term Viability

For over two decades, KIP EAA has effectively balanced SAP's inherent complexity with its rich functionality, utilizing it as backbone technology in business management. Digitalization being constantly high on the agenda, the organization jumped at the chance to modernize its ERP activities. In 2023, a two-fold opportunity arose for its IT department: a requirement to migrate from SAP ECC to SAP S/4 HANA and an upgrade decision regarding SAP BW. While IT was confident about the promises of the new SAP system, it had a strong ambition to overcome the complexities and complications experienced using the legacy reporting platform.

SAP BW Issues Faced:

- Limited, static reports with multiple versions in email causing low engagement
- Slow, manual update processes
- Delays and gaps in data capture and reporting
- Stale data
- Dataset structures hindered analytical data modeling
- Costly specialist BW dependency
- Limited integration with modern tools like Microsoft Power BI

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"The legacy system required nightly refreshes which led to outdated data for the finance team and demanded manual intervention from IT. Developing cubes and fact tables took weeks and enhancing them based on business requests was even more time-consuming. These inefficiencies not only slowed us down, but also created a barrier between IT and the business," says Kevin Lacey.

Inadequate reports were just one usability issue. The lack of integration with Power BI, the preferred front-end application, was a major factor in weak usage—a sore point given the division's commitment to supporting employee productivity using current tools. Accordingly, IT decided to pursue a new solution.

Microsoft

SAP

Implementing Cutting-Edge Technology with Hands on Collaboration

"Like the sign on our front door says, we're about finding ways to make things happen and getting them done. Choosing Simplement for its technology and joint-effort experts let us go with our grain," says Lacey.

Modern Solution for Modern Needs

One of the first SAP S/4 HANA Certified Data Integration Products and the successor to Simplement Data Liberator, Roundhouse is the company's latest data solution. Roundhouse provides a live data feed that is continuously updated from all SAP sources and transforms difficult-to-read data using a semantic layer to provide intuitive and user-friendly views for data structuring. It is designed for easy installation, configuration, administration (including governance and security) and data consumption. The core functionalities and capabilities are concentrated in three main areas: lightweight, real-time data replication; accessible and flexible data structuring; and connectivity to state-of-the-art technology, tools and devices.

Simplement SmartStarts complement Roundhouse by providing a suite of datasets including Star Schema, Fact Tables, Dimensions, data models, and business logic for immediately leveraging data. SmartStarts offer flexible data sets, sample reports, and out-of-the-box Power BI reports for fast end-to-end deployment. Through decades of work with Fortune Global 100 customers, Simplement has developed SmartStarts covering all functional areas: CDS views, custom 'Z' tables, and calculations can be easily added to accommodate any data need.

Preparing the Solution for the Business: An Early Success Story

The IT department conducted the S/4 migration over a period of 6 months. During this period, the reporting revamp project was initiated, starting by connecting Roundhouse to ECC and replacing BW reports. This was followed by switching the reports over from ECC to S/4 as part of the migration. The technical groundwork was swift and straightforward, and the reports worked seamlessly with S/4 data post-cutover. The Roundhouse deployment itself was completed within a couple of days.

Preparing the solution for the business was a hands-on, innovative effort between Simplement and customer teams, resulting in immediate gains right after roll-out.

Roundhouse goes beyond being purpose-built for next-gen ERP reporting. Simplement deliberately simplified the platform to support non-technical users and foster continuous improvement between IT and business units—essential components of ERP operations. The customer leveraged this benefit, as well as relied on Simplement's seasoned experts and close-knit support to effectively integrate the software into business processes and grow user adoption.

Skilled in finance and a forward-thinker, Dan Jones, Commercial Finance Manager at KIP EAA rose to the occasion when IT previously used Data Liberator and the legacy system. With Simplement's help, Jones mastered the technical side, becoming a champion who continues to bridge essential teams at the company.

"The Simplement experts said they would be there every step of the way, and they were. There was no big course to take, and no question was too small. It was: 'we're in this together,'" says Jones.

Jones stepped up again by leveraging the new capabilities and features in Roundhouse, and SmartStarts to build a series of foundational reports. The foundations would later become integral components of dashboards, draw active engagement from finance teams across other KIP regions and serve strategic decision making across finance, production and executive management at the company. The core foundation Jones built is SAP COPA, where a central Fact Table creates the basis for daily sales, intake and bank order reports. Today, that core Fact Table serves 150 reports and 400 users.

"With some refining by Simplement, SmartStarts allowed me to easily create profitability reports prior to roll-out," says Jones.

He adds: "In many ways, Simplement echoes Kingspan Insulated Panels: progress happens through individual and collective growth, fueled by the use of innovative technology." The results that followed clearly demonstrated these principles.

Forward-Thinking ERP Reporting Initiative Leads to Significant Improvements and Lasting Benefits

The transformation project, which upgraded from legacy to modern reporting technologies, resulted in distinct and overlapping impacts on business performance and digitalization.

Success highlights include:

Enhanced Process and Decision-Making re: Profitability

"The value of real-time reporting was immediately apparent during month-end activities because local and divisional finance were able to view updated data virtually on-demand. Coupled with the use of Power BI, they obtained timely and relevant insights for closings. Management benefits from this consistently well-executed closing process; they now confidently evaluate and make decisions on profitability using their own real-time dashboards," says Lacey.

Improved Risk Management

The reporting platform and dashboards boost business agility in many ways, including risk management.

Lacey explains: "We identify issues as they occur and earlier than we could before, which helps us reveal bottlenecks and avoid mistakes, including in key areas like credit management. And, instead of querying why the issue exists, we can quickly drill into the detail and form a more concise plan."

Executive and Sales Empowerment

With mobile access, executives and sales professionals at KIP EAA leverage the insights-rich dashboards anytime, anywhere.

"Having mobile access to Roundhouse-enabled dashboards has been as sensation for our execs and sales—that includes the dashboards we've built for them and those they've created for themselves," says Lacey.

Jones adds: "For sales, being able to walk into a customer meeting and say, 'Out of our thousands of accounts, this view on my phone shows what we've got going together right now, and next year.' is massive."

Expanded Report Usage

Today, of the 2500+ employees at KIP EAA, approximately 500 actively use Power BI reporting using data collected using Roundhouse. Before, 50-100 employees received the company's legacy reports, with few understanding or utilizing them. Roundhouse plus the SmartStarts accelerators resulted in at least 400% growth in ERP reporting usage within KIP EAA.

"Having 25% of division talent using ERP reporting today is a big step forward in our continuous improvement and employee empowerment," says Jones.

Accelerated Visibility for Materials Planning

Planning is paramount in manufacturing. With data collection running automatically and continuously, company production planners evaluate and account for materials' availability faster. As needed, they can then take proactive steps to help ensure that the floor has what it needs to meet customer orders.

[After the new solution went live, Divisional Planning Manager Tony Mitchell, a 20-year veteran at KIP EAA, did something very different on his Sunday evening. Instead of managing the daily refresh for month end close, he had a BBQ with his family. With this shift, Mitchell is more productive in his role and enjoys more time outside of work.]

Increased Situational Awareness

Professionals and teams at the company discover hidden information and surface insights that allow them to offer detailed and big picture views of the business as it is functioning.

"In some cases with BW, we just couldn't get information that we needed or even knew if it existed. Now, with Roundhouse, our end-users not only uncover hidden data but give it context or combine it to provide a full and real-time picture for the business," says Jones.

Flourishing Collaboration and Innovation

Roundhouse and SmartStarts support focused as well as creative teamwork at KIP EAA by giving non-technical professionals the ability to easily create reporting tables, query data and develop standard as well as custom reports.

"Thanks to our finance champion Dan Jones, we've got regional super users helping serve Kingspan Insulated Panels on a global basis," says Lacey.

The teamwork has led to an expanded report library which spans: SAP COPA, P&L/BS, variances, production, warranty, inventory, AR and AP, and overheads.

"Owing to Simplement, we regularly think up creative ideas for expanding reports and can easily bounce them off each other. We couldn't even consider doing that kind of envisaging before with BW," says Lacey.

A More Dynamic and Responsive Data Environment

The transformation produced dramatic improvements in IT agility and productivity, at the outset and ongoing:

- Nightly manual refreshes turned into automated, scheduled updates every 2 hours
- Report building and development, previously taking weeks or months trimmed to hours
- Eliminated SAP specialist support costs
- The finance team contributes business expertise, adding value to reports and back-end operations
- Provisioning advanced self-service analytics and reporting to employees at every level has enabled IT to perform its duties effectively and create additional opportunities for innovation

"Using Roundhouse and Power BI has enabled us to interact and align with the business and develop a lot more. We're miles ahead in terms of building new stuff and being creative," says Lacey.

The transformation of ERP reporting at KIP EAA bolstered by close collaboration between IT, business units, and Simplement—represents a pivotal shift towards a more agile, efficient, and innovation-driven organization. By adopting Roundhouse and SmartStarts, the organization has streamlined reporting, enabled real-time insights, and empowered individuals and teams to make data-driven decisions. The initiative at KIP EAA addressed immediate business needs and helped future-proof operations by laying a solid foundation for ongoing innovation and continuous improvement.

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Thank You