



SALES + MARKETING



Alere and ZS partnered to cut cycle times by 60%, save \$400K in development costs, and build a customer master and BI solution that lays the foundation for future solutions.

ZS technology used:

+ ARTiS™

TECHNOLOGY CASE STUDY: Master Data Management | Analytics

Driving Toward a Data-based Future

ALERE | MEDICAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES | USA

Who are our biggest customers? How much of each product line are they ordering? Who should be compensated? These are simple questions to ask. But for many medical products and services companies, answering them is not simple.

It was that pain point that brought Alere and ZS together. In the process, these new partners rebuilt and automated a formerly manual financial process, built a new reporting environment and lay the groundwork for broad organizational changes that will impact multiple dimensions of Alere’s business for years.

Business Issue

Many hands make messy data

Medical device companies often rely on third-party distributors to sell their products to hospitals and doctors’ offices.

Getting this information from distributors is essential to processing incentive compensation for the field; however, getting the information on time and processing these disparate data sources are significant challenges.

Each distributor uses a different reporting method, which means reports come in different file types. The data they share will be inconsistently formatted. Without a central customer master list, even the names of each customer will be recorded differently.

As a result, finance and field sales organizations often have limited visibility into their own customer base.

The Problem

Messy data impacts the whole organization

Jason Jarrett, senior director of business intelligence and solutions at Alere, wanted to transition the organization to a single-source data strategy—with an integrated customer master that could be a data and reporting foundation for the entire organization. But first, he had to fix a more immediate problem.

Finance personnel were spending most of their time tracking down customer data from distributors, cleaning it and manually processing it using Access and Excel. This naturally led to issues with accuracy and timeliness. When errors were discovered, the entire process would need to start over again, which delayed payments to sales reps. “There was a motivational impact to the field,” said Jason. “You lose trust with your sales force. ‘What’s taking so long? What are they doing with the data?’ We had to fix that.”

With a whole team of analysts and managers spending so much time cleaning and processing data, Alere was losing more than 500 hours per month that could have been spent analyzing and making constructive use of customer data.

But how do you get 50-plus distributors—with little incentive to comply—to adopt a common technology and process, and deliver their records on time? And the data would still need to be cleaned before processing it—no small task. How do you automate that?

Learn more at
www.zsassociates.com



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The Solution

New vision, process and technology

Alere and ZS partnered to reimagine the data collection and compensation process involving third-party distributors—and in the process, build a customer master that could become the foundation Jason wanted for the organization. Together, the partners created:

- + A vision for a well-run process in finance and a new master data management strategy for the firm
- + One customer master that the entire organization can leverage
- + Scorecards that rate each distributors’ efforts to submit data as an incentive to deliver better data, on time
- + A master data management solution built with Reltio (a ZS partner) that enables data stewardship
- + A new reporting platform that provides data visualization and ad hoc analytics

All of this is orchestrated by ARTiS, which is ZS’s own technology. ARTiS serves as the foundation, feeding data from multiple sources and giving Alere a single-source data feed, protecting the process and data integrity.

“ZS did a great job using their domain expertise to help us lay out a new process and a broader BI strategy for us,” said Jason. “Leadership was excited about this new direction for the organization and they got on board quickly.”

The Results

An impactful start to a broader transformation

Alere’s new solution has delivered on all of its expectations and has created a foundation for the master data strategy Jason originally envisioned. Since the implementation, Alere and ZS have:

- + Cut the time finance spent processing data from 60% of their time to 20%
- + Shortened cycle times from 25 days to 10 days, saving Alere more than 500 hours to allocate to more strategic data analysis—this enables time for business insights that Alere didn’t have before
- + Saved approximately \$400K by avoiding in-house development
- + Ensured data is accurate and useful
- + Improved trust and confidence in the field by improving timeliness of compensation
- + Built a future-proof and scalable solution that will benefit the entire organization

“Working with ZS has been a pleasure,” said Jason. “They’re great communicators—they’re more open and transparent than other consultants I’ve worked with. And they’ve integrated really well with my team.”

“We’ve built out a BI foundation for Alere that we can use for broader and more pointed marketing strategies,” added Jason. “For us, it’s ‘what do we do next?’”

ZS is the world’s largest firm focused exclusively on improving business performance through sales and marketing solutions, from customer insights and strategy to analytics, operations and technology. More than 4,000 ZS professionals in 22 offices worldwide draw on deep industry and domain expertise to deliver impact where it matters for clients across multiple industries. To learn more, visit www.zsassociates.com or follow us on Twitter (@ZSAssociates) and LinkedIn.