



Market Strategies International Case Study

MARKET STRATEGIES INTERNATIONAL

Report Automation – Where to Start

Meridith Sigel, Senior Project Manager

In 2007 Market Strategies International began a strategic initiative to improve processes and efficiencies companywide. Our Director of Quality Planning recognized E-Tabs Enterprise offered real potential, however it wasn't until almost two years later that we adopted the software. This case study outlines how we went about implementing E-Tabs Enterprise within our business, how we won over managements' support and how we have benefited from automating our reports and charting process using E-Tabs Enterprise.

The Right Opportunity

In 2007 the Director of Quality Planning attended an automation conference. She recognized the efficiencies report automation would bring to Market Strategies and kept looking for opportunities to implement E-Tabs, but the timing was never perfect. Other improvements were made to processes in that time but we knew report automation with E-Tabs was undeniable.

Her persistence eventually paid off. The Healthcare Industry Group has a strong focus on global studies and this came together nicely with the strategic initiative to move the company's usage of E-Tabs forward. There were two particularly successful pilot projects which paved the way for further automation opportunities.

The Projects

- ▶ Our first pilot project showed a measurable net increase of 7% profit margin for projects using E-Tabs over projects not using E-Tabs
- ▶ The second project was a large tracking study. When it was in its semi annual reporting phase it took up an exorbitant amount of man hours. Before we automated our reporting it took 3 people working overtime for 6 weeks just to get the reports out, using E-Tabs we can now complete the project in 3 weeks with only 1.5 people working on it in their normal working hours
- ▶ Both projects were ready ahead of schedule, and we had improved confidence that they were error free

Our Pilot Projects got the attention of senior management particularly the President of Market Strategies and the Senior Vice President of the Health Care Group. Their support gave us the well needed management push and the momentum to keep our initiative going.

The Results

Today we are striving to find better ways of executing projects so that we can maintain and preserve our profitability in the marketplace.

- ▶ We have more clients providing us with more work more frequently, but expecting faster project turnarounds so the need to do things better and faster has increased
- ▶ We are using E-Tabs report automation to free up our analysts so that they can do more thinking and spend more time adding value instead of populating and proofing
- ▶ We are carrying out more global studies for which automation is very useful, and by using E-Tabs Enterprise we have been able to bid on more work because we have increased our capacity

Selling Internally

So in 2009 with our efficiency initiative under way and the automation pilot projects a success we needed a foolproof business case. We started by looking at what we knew and setting measurable goals for report automation.

- ▶ We knew we wanted to use E-Tabs to automate more, if not all of our work within the Healthcare Group
- ▶ We knew we needed to create a portfolio of example projects, so that teams who had not yet used E-Tabs would feel confident that they could also reap the benefits
- ▶ We knew we needed to get other directors and their teams energized about using E-Tabs by showing them what's in it for them

Meetings were scheduled with the research directors to ask about their projects. We needed to understand the issues they faced before we would be able to address them. They needed to understand what Enterprise is, the benefits, the efficiencies, the profitability, the margin and what type of project makes a good candidate. We discussed the projects we'd already automated and we asked about their project time frames so that we could create a master calendar of all the potential projects for E-Tabs within the Healthcare Group.

Overcoming the Objections

In the initial meetings everyone sounded excited but with change there is always some opposition and the barriers and objections did come.

▶ Custom Projects

At Market Strategies every team has the autonomy to handle reporting however it fits their clients' needs. In certain cases this has lead to some very custom reporting. We have custom rules of when to round up, when to round down, and how to get stack bars exactly to 100. Other teams put little text boxes into the stack bars detailing how many people responded that way. There are also cases where the "don't know" or "refuse to answer categories" are not shown. Many teams make these decisions on a case by case basis. E-Tabs can handle the custom work but we had to tackle the teams concerns and reassure them. The reporting needed to be systematic and done within the rules in a very logical way.

▶ Set Up Time

When it comes to report automation the first wave of tracking is where most of the setup costs are incurred. The subsequent waves of reporting allow you to save a lot of time because you only have to make a few tweaks and changes before you can run the next wave of reporting. To the teams the initial set up time made the projects seem unprofitable; they were concerned this would reflect badly on them. They couldn't see past the first wave of reporting and hadn't taken into account that the subsequent waves would be much quicker. It wasn't long before they realized the overall time saving more than compensated for the time spent on initial set up.

▶ Resistance to change

Populating the PowerPoint charts from banners, SPSS and Excel was one of the biggest tasks the teams carried out before we implemented E-Tabs. They were resistant because they felt their job was being taken away. The teams didn't see the enhanced opportunity for growth and value that E-Tabs added.

We used management to reiterate that automation was about growth and allowing people to focus on what they do best. Report automation using E-Tabs would essentially allow the analysts to do more thinking and analyzing instead of populating and proofing.

▶ Limited Resources

Market Strategies has a couple of groups using E-Tabs. At peak reporting times the demand for automation goes up and with only 1 or 2 people trained on Enterprise in each group the supply is not always available. We've tackled this issue by prioritising projects and putting together a schedule in the hope of getting everyone serviced.

Implementing E-Tabs

Every company has their way of doing things and Market Strategies is no exception.

We've realized reporting should be thought about much earlier in the project life cycle, essentially once the survey has been finalized so that you can use forethought and planning when you're drafting your analysis plan. Taking the time to think about how to structure our data helped us ensure we had a streamlined execution.

E-Tabs has some great sorting capabilities that are worth taking advantage of. Consider whether you want to sort in your data source or if you want to sort as you populate. We found our fielding time was the best time to do all our setup because it enabled us to create our reports minutes after receiving the data.

By re-contacting the teams when we knew their projects were getting closer we ensured they didn't forget about E-Tabs, it helped them in their planning and ensured we got their buy in. Currently we are using E-Tabs for a lot of our tracking work. With each project we automate we are winning. Our people are seeing those successes and definitely feeling their burdens relieved.

Moving Forward

Market Strategies implemented E-Tabs because we knew it would allow our project teams to focus on value generating activities such as thinking about what the data really means for the client, digging further into findings for insights that weren't apparent when you were doing your analysis plan and most importantly generating actual recommendations.

Our secondary goal was to deliver the current level of service at a lower cost allowing us to keep our competitiveness in the market as well as maintaining, if not improving, our profitability.

We plan to make E-Tabs a company wide process for automation. In fact when we train new employees we are training them with processes that fit well with E-Tabs and we are making those processes our standards. We are getting more industry groups involved, the Technology group and Financial Services group within Market Strategies already use E-Tabs. We are always on the lookout for more projects to automate and thus always moving our organization's strategic initiative forward.

About Market Strategies International

Market Strategies is the 16th largest U.S. and 20th largest international strategic research and consulting firm. We provide customer, market, and policy intelligence for effective decision making to clients across five different industry sectors. Market Strategies employ innovative research methodologies and analytical techniques to ensure we provide value-added products and services to our clients. Our strong focus on global research and customer intimacy allows us to form highly consultative relationships with our clients in their selected industries.

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