

# AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals Phils.

## The Company

AstraZeneca is one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies. Backed by a strong research base and extensive manufacturing and commercial skills, it provides innovative, effective medicines that make a real difference for patients in important areas of healthcare. It aims to be the first with new ideas and be innovative in all areas of their activity to create value for their customers, shareholders, employees and the communities in which they work.

AstraZeneca Philippines is one of the country's top five pharmaceutical companies and is the manufacturer of the world's bestselling medicine, Losec.



## The situation

AstraZeneca Philippines' (AZP) Information Services Division saw the need to upgrade the company's existing data warehousing system because its old system was cumbersome and non-intuitive.

According to AstraZeneca Information Services Manager Jonathan Javier, the old system, which was DOS-based, required the company's programmers to manually encode data. Because of this, the MIS staff maintained all reports and had to update them every time requests were made. Since the system was also non-intuitive, requests for new reports or data iterations had to be manually re-encoded. The old system was not only tedious but also highly prone to errors.

To further complicate matters, AZP's database was already all in the old system. Encoding it again into a new database would have been a costly and time-consuming exercise. Thus, there was a great need for technology that could easily migrate the existing database into the new system.

## The solution

The Information Services Division's first step towards revamping AZP's old data warehousing system was to convert to a Windows-based system, which allowed users and managers to directly encode their data using Microsoft Excel.

The group then coupled the company's existing Microsoft-based front-end solutions with Microsoft SQL Server 2000 to develop a new data warehousing system that would be fast, intuitive, user-friendly and cost-effective.

The new data warehousing system, named Picasso, is geared initially towards AZP's sales and marketing operations. The system is built on SQL Server 2000. Its front-end computing environment, on the other hand, is Windows 2000,

Microsoft Office 2000, Microsoft Outlook 2000 and Internet Explorer 5.

The new system now eliminates the need for programmers to constantly create customized reports. The user-friendly interface, on the other hand, now allows users to create their own customized reports by clicking and dragging items in the report.

*We want to deploy a certain application or put new options, we won't have to recall their notebooks and install the clients. All the user has to do is to go to the server to update the pages. The system is virtually maintenance free and users can handle it easily."*

## Why Microsoft?

According to Javier, the decision to use Microsoft technology was based on the fact that the Microsoft software suite “integrates well, so whenever we create a new application using SQL database, all we have to do is link it to our networked SQL servers and it automatically becomes part of the system.”

Another reason he cited was the cost advantage. Since AZP already owned an Enterprise license, going with Microsoft’s solution translated into lower implementation costs since the need to buy another set of licenses was eliminated.

Javier said they “could have used Oracle’s sales data analyzer, but [with the Microsoft solution,] we can achieve the same results without spending for expensive licenses.”

He also mentioned that users had no problem using the new system because they were already familiar with how Microsoft products work.

“Instead of training them on how to use the tools, we can concentrate more on teaching them about the system’s functionalities.”

Another advantage is that upgrading to newer software would be easier because of Microsoft’s support.

## Business Benefits

With the new Picasso data warehousing system, a number of benefits have already been seen by AstraZeneca Philippines.

The first benefit they noticed was savings in time.

Javier revealed that they now spend more time analyzing data rather than constantly re-encoding it. The system’s flexibility also contributes to faster data report generation, which tremendously helps in the company’s operations.

The time benefit can also be attributed to the shorter training period for Picasso users. Since almost all computer users are familiar with Microsoft’s products, most notably MS Excel – the primary reporting tool used by the system, man hours are saved since trainers can spend more time discussing the merits of the system rather than on how to operate.

Another benefit cited is cost advantage. Microsoft’s products are offered at a far lower cost than other data warehousing software. Microsoft SQL Server’s scaling capabilities add flexibility in terms of expansion and upgrades. This, in effect, translates to long-term savings as it lessens the company’s total cost of ownership.

AZP’s long-term vision for the Picasso system – to eventually transform it into a web-based system – fits well with Microsoft’s web-based initiatives. This once again translates to time and cost benefits because the infrastructure is already in place and will not be changed or upgraded drastically.

Javier also pointed out that it fits in with AZP’s directions to eventually deploy all applications through the web.

“Let’s say we want to deploy a certain application or put new options, we won’t have to recall their notebooks and install the clients. All the user has to do is to go to the server to update the pages. The system is virtually maintenance free and users can handle it easily.”

## The Future

AZP’s vision for the Microsoft-based Picasso data warehousing system is to eventually offer it as a web-based system. This will enable its agents and employees to access data from wherever they are, which can translate to both more profits and savings.

The company is also planning to expand the system’s capabilities beyond the use of its sales and marketing operations personnel. The company sees tremendous potential for the system in terms of its other departments. AZP is also planning on adding ‘value-added’ initiatives into the system that can help in tracking the performance of its products and in seeing the results in an instant.

## TECHNICAL OVERVIEW :

Company	:	Astra Zeneca Pharmaceuticals Phils., Inc.
Industry/branch	:	Pharmaceutical
System architecture	:	Microsoft DNA (client-server)
System architecture	:	Windows 2000
Desktop application	:	Office 2000
Messaging	:	Exchange Server 5.5, Outlook 2000
Database	:	MS SQL Server 2000 Enterprise Edition
Software application	:	VisualBasic development tools
Backend	:	MS SQL Server 2000 Enterprise Edition
Frontend	:	MS Excel 2000, IE 5
Remote access facility	:	RAS Service with secure ID token card authentication
Implementation Partner	:	Database Wizards Inc.,

**Microsoft**

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