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Helzberg Diamonds Drives Nationwide Growth With Ascential Information Asset Management Solution

Fast-growing subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway Speeds Weekly Sales Reports to Managers Using Ascential DataStage® XE

Westboro, MA, – Ascential Software Corporation (NASDAQ: ASCL), the leading provider of Information Asset Management (IAM) solutions, today announced that Helzberg Diamonds is using DataStage® XE to increase profits through better revenue tracking and on time analytic reporting. Using DataStage XE to populate its data warehouse with daily sales data from 230-plus stores nationwide, Helzberg Diamonds has moved from monthly to daily revenue reporting for their regional field managers. The data warehouse provides corporate, divisional, regional and store managers better information to more proactively manage their business areas, with the overall focus on delivering improved product and services to their customers. This same information is also being used to evaluate new store performance as the company expands into new markets.

Previously, information from each of Helzberg's retail stores was uploaded and combined nightly into a central database at the company's corporate offices in Missouri. Housed on an IBM AS/400 DB2-based server, this information was stored in the company's transaction based legacy systems at a very granular level that was difficult to produce accurate and timely reporting. In addition, many of the legacy reports that were received on a monthly basis were manually aggregated to produce reports that contained all the metrics the store management group needed to effectively manage their business area. Recognizing that this solution was too inflexible and slow to meet the information needs of Helzberg's corporate and field management team, the company initiated a data warehouse project in 1998.

By using DataStage XE to consolidate, aggregate and enhance nightly retail information into Helzberg's IBM AS/400 data warehouse server, and by replacing legacy system reporting with a suite of Brio reporting tools (Brio Software (Nasdaq: BRIO)), the jewelry retailer now produces comprehensive sales reports in hours rather than days. This enables Helzberg's field and corporate managers to leverage the information in a timely fashion, including peak retail periods.

"Using DataStage XE, we're able to easily place sophisticated, weekly reports into managers' hands, giving them more granular control over how they meet their sales goals and sharpen Helzberg's competitive edge," said Greg Backhus, Helzberg's director of data warehousing/decision support systems. "With the Ascential solution, managers no longer have to rely on 'yesterday's news,' but can use real-time data to assess new strategies to increase Helzberg's revenue and better service our customers."

For sophisticated query and analysis, Brio Intelligence™ is the most advanced and easy-to-use set of tools available. Leveraging data from existing enterprise information systems, Brio Intelligence provides executives, analysts, developers and employees with powerful query and analysis capabilities supported by an intuitive, web-enabled interface. Delivering business-critical information, Brio Intelligence drives an interactive understanding of business opportunities and trends, empowering employees to make optimal decisions.

"We are very excited about working with a strategic global provider of Information Asset Management," said Brian Gentile, CMO and executive vice president for Brio Software. "Partnering with Ascential allows us to leverage its cutting edge technology to provide Helzberg Diamonds with the tools needed to strengthen its business performance while maintaining a cost structure that maximizes return on investment".

Strategic Information Asset Management

DataStage XE receives nightly extracts of data for as many as 100,000 retail transactions, as well as data on store payroll and merchandise. Pulled from their store systems , the data is consolidated, aggregated, cleansed and placed into a detailed

database architecture, reflecting the Helzberg business model. This database architecture resides on their IBM AS/400 data warehouse server.

Helzberg's 27 regional and district managers then use Brio desktop and portal solutions to access store scorecard reports containing key business metrics such as store performance versus budget, sales by sales associate, credit program sales, sales by product category and hourly revenue per store. Helzberg's regional managers use this information to coach store managers, improve sales within merchandise categories, target staff training, and administer payroll. Similarly, Helzberg's corporate managers, including finance, human resources, general management and marketing staff, access the same information through a series of data marts and a set of pre-defined and ad hoc reports to ensure operational efficiency of their departments.

Helzberg is also leveraging DataStage XE's meta data component -- explaining the meaning of every piece of corporate data -- to give staff a more complete understanding of the meaning of each column within a report. By right clicking over a specific value when building a Brio report, users can quickly view the origin and meaning of each value. In addition, using DataStage XE's data quality components, Helzberg's IT group has been able to audit their source data and address data quality issues before they appear in the warehouse or data marts.

"DataStage XE is an extremely powerful integration tool that allows us to be much more proactive in meeting our sales reporting goals," Backhus concluded. "The robust Ascential solution keeps us informed about the performance of our company and permits us to leverage that information to develop effective revenue-generating strategies to drive our growth."

About Helzberg

Helzberg Diamonds a subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway, located in North Kansas, MO, is one of the nation's leading fine jewelry retailers, employing nearly 3,000 associates at 230 plus stores nationwide. Helzberg's dedication to giving customers the ultimate in personalized service and quality products for the past 87 years has contributed greatly to company's longevity and reputation. Keeping pace with the 21st century, Helzberg recently launched a Web site and is opening 15-20 new stores per year to expand its products and services to an ever-growing community of consumers.

About Brio Software

Brio Software is a leading provider of next-generation business intelligence tools and applications that help Global 3000 companies achieve breakthrough business performance. Widely recognized as one of the easiest-to-use and deploy solutions in the industry, the Brio Performance Suite expands business intelligence beyond advanced query and analysis technologies to include powerful information delivery through enterprise-class reporting and personalized performance dashboards. Used by nearly 70 percent of the Fortune 100, Brio products empower individuals, workgroups and executives in an organization to turn enterprise information into actionable insight, so superior decisions and business performance result. Founded in 1989, and headquartered in Santa Clara, CA, Brio products and services can be found around the globe at www.brio.com. <<http://www.brio.com/>>

About Ascential

Ascential Software Corporation is the leading provider of Information Asset Management solutions to the Global 2000. Customers use Ascential products to turn vast amounts of disparate, unrefined data into reusable information assets that drive business success. Ascential's unique framework for Information Asset Management enables customers to easily collect, validate, organize, administer and deliver information assets to realize more value from their enterprise data, reduce costs and increase profitability. Headquartered in Westboro, MA, Ascential has offices worldwide and supports more than 1,800 customers in such industries as telecommunications, insurance, financial services, healthcare, media/entertainment and retail. More information on Ascential Software can be found on the Web at <http://www.ascentialsoftware.com>.

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