

# QlikView's "Revolutionary Technology" Succeeds Where OLAP Failed

*"In four hours, one person achieved with QlikView what teams of IT consultants working with OLAP couldn't achieve in a year and a half."*

Michael Korin, Chief Information Officer, Superior Graphite Co.

## Company Background

Superior Graphite Company ([www.superiorgraphite.com](http://www.superiorgraphite.com)) produces a broad range of graphite and carbon products for thousands of industrial applications around the world. Specialists in high temperature technologies, advanced sizing, blending, and coating technologies, the company offers more than 20 branded product lines serving the needs of more than a dozen eclectic global markets – from ferrous metallurgy (iron and steel) to friction materials, agriculture to batteries and fuel cells, advanced ceramics to polymers and composites.

Since its founding in 1917, Superior Graphite has explored the physical and geographical frontiers of its markets. The Chicago-based company operates three laboratories for R&D and product support in its quest for innovative customer solutions, and works with national laboratories and universities on programs for materials technology advancements. Over the years, Superior Graphite's steadfast commitment to three core principals – ingenuity, versatility, and integrity – has enabled it to adapt to ever-changing business and economic conditions, and transform its customers' challenges into new opportunities for success.

## Challenge: Costly Development of Executive Dashboards without Results

Sometimes, a CIO just has to play the cards dealt. Such was the fate of Superior Graphite's CIO Michael Korin. Owners of the privately held company wanted executive dashboards – business intelligence – to base their decision making on more timely and informative data, such as current sales by region and product code, and other instant sales data analyses and comparisons with prior periods. Moreover, an IT consultant was already brought in with whom Michael would work to take their idea from concept to reality.

"Reporting drives the business, but we couldn't get the reporting we really needed from our ERP system. Our company depended on Lotus Notes and spreadsheets for its sales

### In brief

**Company**  
Superior Graphite

**Industry**  
Industrial Products

**Challenge**  
Prolonged, costly development of executive dashboards using IT consultants and a leading OLAP product without results

**Solution**

- First day results with QlikView pilot application
- Fast, successful deployment without need for IT consultants

**Benefits**

- Usable business intelligence with QlikView-powered executive dashboards
- No daily needs for IT to build and maintain users' OLAP cubes
- Recognition of additional QlikView value elsewhere in the company for accounting, sales, and IT operations analytical reporting
- New opportunities to improve company performance and competitive advantages



and operational analyses,” said Korin. “The consultant came in to equip us with business intelligence and recommended a product from one of the leading OLAP-based providers and new hardware.”

When the project dragged on without any results, the company dismissed the consultant and his supporting team. “We had spent six figures on consulting time, hardware and software, none of which was deemed necessary. That’s a big chunk of money for any business.” Michael started to work on the reporting challenge himself. Then QlikTech called “out of the blue” and everything went smoothly after that.

## Solution: Four-Hour QlikView Applications Development

A demonstration of QlikView from QlikTech breathed new life into the lost cause for Korin.

QlikView’s apparent speed, ease of use, and functionality during the demo intrigued him.

“I asked: ‘Could it work with Lotus Notes?’ and the QlikTech rep said ‘yes,’” recounted Korin.

“I asked: ‘Could it work with Websphere?’ and the rep said ‘yes.’ Those were our main requirements.”

So Korin sat for a two and a half hour training session and “borrowed” QlikView for the weekend.

“I did the phase one application of our project – what two teams of consultants couldn’t do in 18 months with OLAP – in four hours with QlikView,” laughed Korin.

The phase one application was a first executive dashboard showing gross sales by product code with data drilling, manipulation and instant analytical capabilities that provided views of Superior Graphite sales never seen before.

*“QlikView is truly a revolutionary software,” said Korin. “IT has been looking for years for the next big thing. This is it. The speed, the ease of use, the way QlikView connects to databases instead of building OLAP cubes – I fail to see how it will not dominate the market.”*

Michael Korin, Chief Information Officer, Superior Graphite Co.

Convinced that QlikView was the answer to his company’s business intelligence goals, Korin still had to sell the idea to Superior Graphite’s owners. “Actually, that wasn’t difficult,” said Korin. “QlikView product presented a strong business case; I didn’t have to develop one. When I showed the owners what I produced in four hours over the weekend, they pretty much gave me a blank check – not that a blank check was needed.”

The company licensed QlikView on a Thursday and put it into production on the following Monday.

## Benefits: “Usable” Business Intelligence

All of the company’s financials are now live on QlikView. “We never had the ability to analyze that data – in the past we had a 50 page report. Now we can slice and dice by plant, accounting code, balance sheets, trial balances, whatever,” said Korin.



Dashboards cover each accounting function, trends, KPIs, balance sheets, P&L – sorted by company, plant, accounting code and expense and each of the couple of hundred product lines. “We track our financial information throughout the month, practically in real time. This allows us to analyze trends faster and find trouble spots quickly – so we don’t lose time,” Korin explained. QlikView applications visualized information with trending graphs that show sales, open orders and projected billing vs. budgeted.

The president now has sales forecasting as a gas gauge on his dashboard. He has now challenged the sales teams for 100% “green,” meaning hitting the forecast number 95% of the time.

“QlikView provides the flexibility to graphically view and report any type of data in different ways. We get instant data analyses and that have been unavailable to us. That makes a lot of jobs easier and improves performance at Superior Graphite with new insights into information that until now were inaccessible.”

This initial scope focused on history; the next phase will help Superior Graphite better predict the future. Korin plans on taking the company’s sales forecasts into “what-if” analyses to see how various scenarios affect the bottom line. “What if costs in a particular product line go up by 10%? Which other product could we sell more of to make up the difference? This is a huge advantage for us to see into the future and determine the right moves to improve profitability,” Korin said. According to him, “Without QlikView, it simply couldn’t be done.”

“QlikView is truly a revolution in business intelligence software. It’s unfortunate that we did not come across QlikView earlier. We would have saved a lot of money and been further ahead at this point. At least we’re on the inside track with the better technology now; it can only help our company’s performance and competitive advantage.”

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