

> Avans University

Dutch university uses data mining software from SPSS Inc. to prepare future marketers for entry into the business world

Situation

On January 1, 2004, Avans University of Applied Sciences was formed from the merger of Hogeschool Brabant and Hogeschool 's-Hertogenbosch, two universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands. These universities were already working closely together under one executive board and now, thanks to the merger, are a single institution called Avans University. The university offers a wide range of courses within various disciplines and with various study tracks. It has three sites in the Netherlands: Breda, 's-Hertogenbosch, and Tilburg.

Challenge

Avans University wanted to include data mining in its curriculum. For marketing students, it's vital to have knowledge of data mining prior to entering the workforce. Modern marketers must be able to extract information from their organization's various systems, such as marketing and sales databases, analyze it, and use the results to make business decisions. Data mining helps marketers accomplish these tasks, giving them a method to easily obtain information that was previously inaccessible or difficult to obtain.

The next challenge for Avans University was to find an appropriate data mining solution. The university wanted software that would be suitable for use during lectures. It was also important to select data mining software that is frequently used by businesses in order to give students real-life experience. The lecturers were concerned about ease of use, aiming to minimize student complaints. "We wanted to avoid having to constantly step in because of problems with the software. Moreover, you want to familiarize your students with data mining software that is going to be a success in the market. And one that is supported by a high-quality organization," said Paul Heise, a part-time lecturer at Avans University.

Solution

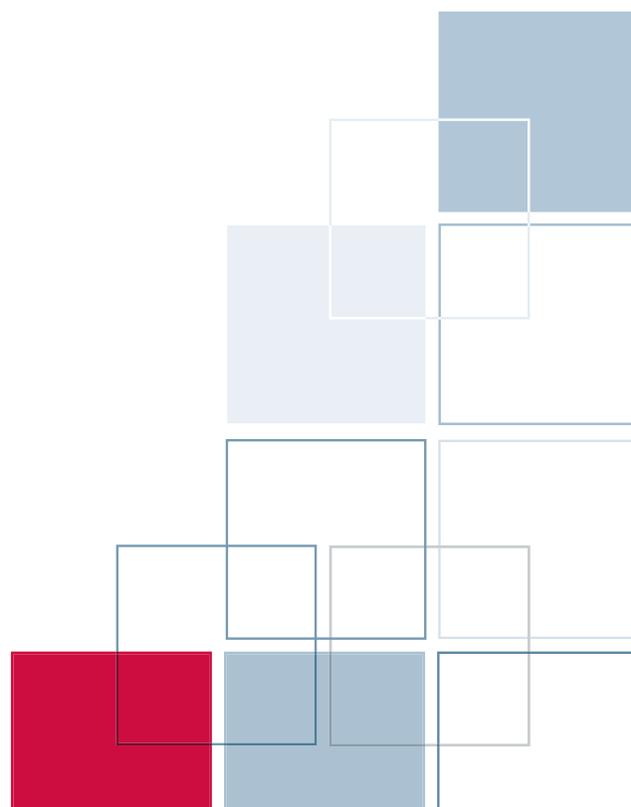
Avans University made a conscious decision to use Clementine®, SPSS Inc.'s data mining solution. In particular, the university was impressed with the Clementine Application Templates (CATs). Data mining gurus and experts from the business community developed these templates on the basis of the CRISP-DM (CRoss-Industry Standard Process for Data Mining) methodology. CATs are application-specific libraries of best practices, and include complete sample datasets that enable users to master applications that they can then apply to their own data.

At a glance

Country: The Netherlands
Industry: Higher education
Data founded: 2004
Students: Approximately 18,000

Application

Data mining instruction



■ Data mining instruction

In explaining the university's choice, Heise said, "Think about it—SPSS' data mining tool is the most widely sold solution in the world. The user interface is intuitive and easy to understand. The Dutch SPSS organization is well organized, providing rapid response and good, helpful service. And SPSS allows you to make use of a ready-made data mining file with 150,000 records, pre-defined streams, and a user-friendly manual."

Hands-on implementation

Avans University piqued students' interest in data mining with a two-hour introductory lecture. The students then used the online tutorial to gain some insight into how to use the software. After a quarter of an hour, most of the students already understood and could use the application. Working in pairs, the students used the case manual and pre-defined streams to accomplish a clearly defined data mining objective.

Results

- The university created 65 data mining assignments, which were successfully completed by 98 percent of the 130 data mining students. The assignments covered using the software, the data mining learning process, and the user application in the telecommunications field. Student reaction to the projects varied from moderately positive to extremely positive.

- Evaluations show that this subject is one of the most popular subjects in the university's second academic year
- Within a few years, the university will have equipped hundreds of students with SPSS and data mining knowledge, providing them with skills to keep them competitive in the business community

"As a lecturer, I only had to spend two hours per class offering support. This time was used mainly to explain the context and to help students understand the graphics generated by SPSS," said Heise. The students spent approximately six to eight hours per pair working on the task. "And this was more than enough time to gain some insight into the matter and to grasp the essentials of data mining as a strategic marketing tool," Heise explained.

This software, its ease of use, and this implementation approach support Avans University's philosophy of learning by doing. And, most importantly, the university provides its marketing students with the data mining skills expected in the business world.

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