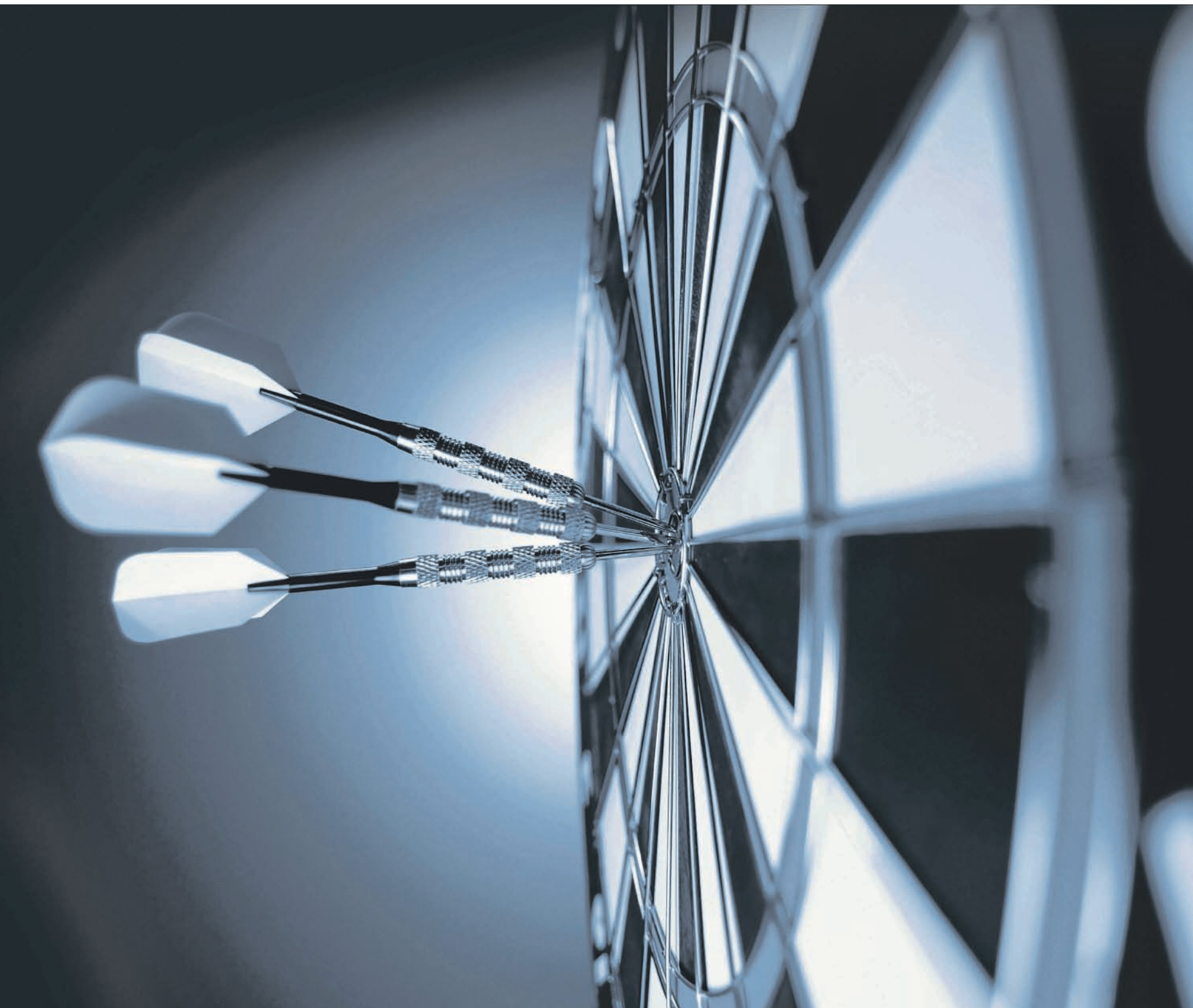


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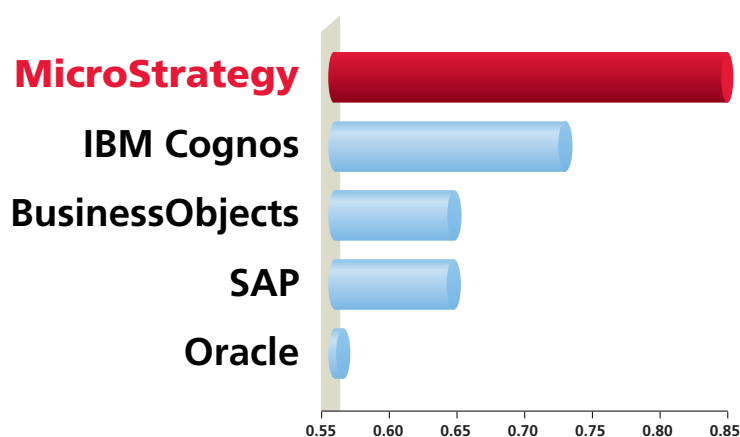
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Customer Loyalty Index



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Products analyzed: MicroStrategy, IBM Cognos Reporting, BusinessObjects, SAP BW, and Oracle Essbase. Data from The BI Survey 7, the world's largest independent survey of the BI market space, analyzing experiences of nearly 2,000 respondents. See BI-Survey.com

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Foreword



Claudia Imhoff, Ph.D., President, Intelligent Solutions, Inc.

BI is shorthand for Business Intelligence but it might as well stand for "brilliant innovation". BI is a subset of information technology, or IT, which has gained significant importance and momentum over the last two decades. Today, BI is a bright spot of technological innovation on the partly cloudy IT horizon.

Why? Because, BI frequently delivers new, unique information – intelligence -- to decision makers at all levels of the organization, helping them improve their performance, productivity, and more. The results speak for themselves. BI remains a primary initiative, and budget item, for businesses, governments, and venture capitalists all over the world.

From simple roots (think Lotus 1-2-3), the BI industry's growth and sophistication have paralleled that of computing in general. Data integration, analysis, and presentation are the heart and soul of BI. Advances in processor speed, storage, networking, etc. have enabled BI systems to access, evaluate, and make sense of unbelievably large amounts of data.

BI provides a seemingly unlimited number of opportunities

for new insights into an organization's activities; from understanding customer behaviors, to determining potential compliance breaches, to quickly detecting fraudulent activities, to streamlining supply and demand chains, and so on. In short, the odds are very good that those who invest in sophisticated BI environments will be handsomely rewarded with a variety of competitive advantages over time.

Now for the fine print. Implementing BI, especially where none existed before, is challenging. It takes leadership, planning, resources, and tolerance of change. To complicate things, many companies – large and small – face one or more of the following situations. They continue to rely on spreadsheets or other manual processes in the attempt to garner intelligence about their market spaces. They've found that doing BI on a shoestring often leads to chaos. They're confused about the proper architecture for BI. The ongoing acquisition of smaller BI vendors by their bigger brethren leave them bewildered about whether to select the specialized, best of breed vendor or the one with an end-to-end solution. The role of consultants is important, but where to use them? How are BI capabilities aligned with strategic objectives? How is unstructured data handled?

It seems, for every question answered, three more pop up. So, I am pleased to introduce this special report, which sheds needed light on BI's latest trends, technological advancements, new applications, and exciting developments.

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Cultural Strength

BI allows organizations to anticipate problems earlier and react more quickly and effectively than their competitors.

Corporate data is increasing dramatically at a time when organizations are facing ever more intense competition. They have increased the efficiency of their business processes and reduced costs. Most of all, they have tried to maximize their market potential, but this in turn has increased the volume of data they have created.

"We will see an information explosion over the next five years to an order of magnitude we never expected," says Michael Corcoran, chief marketing officer at Information Builders. "It is a major time for change and an exciting time."

When the business environment is constantly changing, winning organizations must recognize changes early and react quickly and effectively. Only

by changing the way that things are done, how people behave, by innovating and improving customer service are they able to maintain an advantage over their competitors.

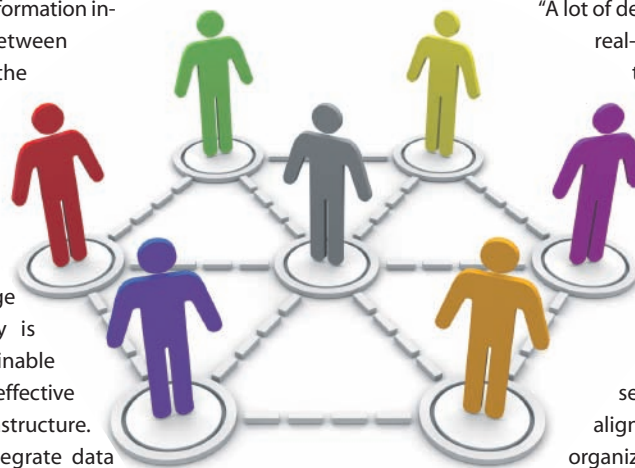
However, with stored information increasing at anything between 40% and 60% each year, the ability to capture and process huge and complex data volumes to find out what is happening has outstripped our ability to exploit it.

Competitive advantage through business agility is only achievable and sustainable if the organization has an effective business intelligence infrastructure.

This will unify and integrate data

held throughout the organization to create a single source of accurate information to support decision-making. This can then be reported, monitored, analyzed and modeled. A BI system embraces planning to tell managers what they want to happen; reports on what has happened; analysis to tell them why it happened; dashboards and scorecards to tell them what is happening now; and forecasts to tell them what is going to happen.

Analysis of customer transactions will



also lead to greater understanding of customer behavior, allow customers to be segmented and support personalized marketing campaigns to individual customers. All the activities can be automated to feed real-time analysis of current transactions into operational business processes, such as personalized web pages or call centre scripts.

"BI software must present users with things they need to know, whether or not they know they need to know it, and should answer questions users don't know how to ask," says Corcoran.

"A lot of decisions are based on new or real-time data, so predictive real-time analytics must be embedded to enable managers to make decision on data that isn't yet in a structured database."

BI drives better decision-making and business processes in order to increase customer service and profitability and aligns the behavior of the entire organization behind its goals. How-

ever, this alignment can only really occur if the software is in use in all parts of the organization, called 'pervasive BI.'

Pervasive business intelligence is vital for identifying the strategic drivers of the business and motivating the front-line staff who create value. Closing the loop by feeding BI decisions back into operational systems optimizes business processes, creates business agility and sustainable competitive advantage, creating long-term shareholder value.

BI must be properly implemented within a structured management framework and be supported by a robust change programme. It isn't easy, but success will transform performance and increase sustainable competitive advantage.

"BI is not about processing information faster and presenting it to more people," says Don Campbell, chief technology officer at Cognos. "It is about understanding how to apply it in a competitively differentiated way and making it a cultural strength of the organization."

BI is the Chief Analytics Officer

BI systems must drive decision-making, says Atul Jalan.

One of the best sources of competitive differentiation is through innovative business processes. Business intelligence can support this by transforming itself from a decision support system into a decision-making system.

BI applications must stop being complex solutions focused primarily on analysts and power users. They must be industry-specific and accessible to a wide range of users, by embracing collaborative and workflow-guided analytics and data visualization. Such systems should be used by 60 to 90% of employees, compared with only 3 to 10% for traditional solutions.

New generation BI solutions support decision-making through modeling, to predict the likely outcome of various solutions to a problem and simulate the effects of variable factors on the business. They automate a user's natural workflow to drive operational systems. In retail, this might cover price management, customer service, replenish-

ment, customer segmentation, market basket analysis, price optimization and customer behavior prediction.

The applications have an industry specific enterprise-wide data model that understands and anticipates decision-making nuances and analytic requirements for performance management. For instance, prescriptive role-based analytic applications in retail include merchandise planning, store lifecycle management, promotion evaluation and category management.

Moving from decision-support to decision-making allows instant reaction to transient market opportunities, through identification, analysis, collaboration and finally action/reaction. In this way the BI application becomes the organization's chief analytics officer. BI for the masses, democratization of data and decision centric BI are complementary trends that will bring about transformational change.

Atul Jalan is chief executive officer at Manthan Systems
www.manthansystems.com | www.arc-bi.com

Most People like to be Spoon Fed

BI software mustn't turn managers into secretaries, it must help them run their businesses, says Christian Ofori-Boateng.

Human beings haven't evolved as fast as computer software. Most people still like to have the information they need presented to them in a format they can use, so they can concentrate on running their business.

Unfortunately, business intelligence software developers seem to think that everybody lives their life through their computers, just like they do. They expect managers to log into an intranet site and find the information they need. By the time they get their log-in wrong three times, get locked out, call support, get in, specify the information they want from a complex set of menus and print it off, they have spent the first hour of the day on secretarial work!

When most managers arrive at the office

they just want to pick up their information from their in-tray, printer or fax machine and read it over coffee. They are entirely focused on running their business and want the technology to support them by giving them information in the way they want to use it - even if it means stuffing printed reports into an envelope and posting it to them!

The BI industry has the right objective in wanting to get information to the people who need it, when they need it, to make decisions to run their business, but it is wrong in expecting them to get it for themselves. People want to be 'spoon fed' their information, so software must work in a way that human beings are comfortable with so they can get on with their day's work.

Christian Ofori-Boateng is chief executive officer of ChristianSteven Software.

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EXPERTS SHARE THEIR VISION



Foster Hinshaw is president and chief executive officer of Dataupia Corporation.

One-to-One Nirvana

Individual personalization is the ultimate objective of BI, says Foster Hinshaw.

BI nirvana has always been to create personalized messages that offer unique products and services created for the recipient alone. Nobody reads a catalogue from cover to cover, because they don't want to waste time with things they have no interest in.

Organizations are now collecting data about their customers, through transactions, web activity and purchased data and their ability to understand them has increased dramatically. They use BI to send their customers targeted offers that are relevant and interesting.

However, acquiring and utilizing this data are two very different things and very few people are doing even narrow personalization to small groups. Although businesses like Google, Staples and Wal-mart Stores are outstanding in their use of BI to target customers, you can still count on one hand the number of organizations in any one industry that make really good use of BI. In order to compete effectively organizations must evolve to use BI to its fullest. Com-

panies must be able to access, sort, analyze and, in turn, utilize this BI data without investing excessive time, money and manpower. Data warehouse appliances now allow companies to collect, store, and query massive amounts of data to accomplish this goal.



Chris Modzelewski, chief executive officer at ChartSearch Inc

Natural Language

Search is a natural interface with BI data, says Chris Modzelewski.

There are economic limitations in the traditional report-driven model of business intelligence. Organizations are constantly buying-in or creating new types of data, so volume and complexity is constantly increasing. They employ expensive analysts who can use advanced techniques to carry out complex high value strategic analysis, mining mountains of information for golden nuggets.

However, they are spending most of their time producing labor intensive new reports and dashboards on this data for users. This creates a vicious circle, whereby new reports cause users to ask more questions, so they request more reports. Unfortunately, the traditional solution of hiring more analysts will not break this circle. Google has shown the way forward, by giving users a natural language interface to

find the unstructured data they need. This type of simplicity is what users have come to expect, and increasingly demand from BI solutions. BI solutions of the future will be more accessible to users, by providing a search-driven user experience. They will read written requests from users and search structured relational and multi-dimensional databases. They will automatically generate new reports and charts and send them back, ranked in relevance. As an example this approach creates competitive advantage in the fast-moving con-

sumer goods marketplace, where manufacturers are constantly negotiating with major retailers. A series of meetings are conducted using detailed internal and external data. Instead of constantly going back to the office to generate new reports, account managers can grab the new information they need during a single meeting. With limited shelf space available, and pressure to grow sales, the manufacturer that can prove it has the most profitable proposal the fastest will get the lion's share!

The Cycle Starts Over

As the business software giants absorb the specialist BI vendors, new innovative start-ups may be drawn in.

For the last five years the BI industry has undergone massive consolidation through acquisitions and mergers. Companies like Business Objects, Cognos and Hyperion purchased company after company as they sought to build suites of BI software that covered a wide range of functionality. However, in the last year all three have fallen to application giants SAP, IBM and Oracle respectively. This leaves Information Builders, MicroStrategy and SAS as the main independent BI vendors. With the huge success of integrated suites of transactional business software, it is clear that user organizations have a strong preference for purchasing the functionality they need from a single vendor, rather than having to integrate it themselves. On that basis, BI ceases to be an industry and becomes just a set of functionality from a software giant's suite.

However, over the last few years the 'best of breed' software vendors in segment after segment have refused to die. When they offer superior functionality, customers choose them as a source of competitive advantage.

Mark LaRow, vice president of products at MicroStrategy, says that following their acquisitions the 'megavendors' are in significant flux and haven't yet integrated their new products. "When that is the case," he says, "customers look for innovation or a product that will give them the next step forward."

He also argues that scalability becomes important to customers as BI use spreads to large numbers of users throughout the enterprise. If the acquired BI product won't scale, customers can't use a megavendor's entire software stack. "Scalability is the frontier and takes years and years," he says. "It is a moving target, as organizations continually want to add more users. Others have to catch up and then stay abreast."

There is a feeling that specialist software vendors are quicker to develop software and more innovative than the megavendors, who are slower and more bureaucratic. Richard Creeth, president of Creeth, Richman and Associates, a BI consultancy, says that the big companies have their hands full with integration.

"The whole cycle will start over again," he says. "There will be a new generation of really innovative start-up companies that will be where MicroStrategy was 15 years ago."

Nuggets of Value

Using BI to drive business performance involves aligning the behavior of the entire organization behind its long-term objectives.

When embedded in the management process of the organization, BI can help every individual in the organization to behave in a way that contributes to its long-term objectives. This approach is variously termed business performance management (BPM) or corporate performance management (CPM).

It works as a closed loop, translating overall strategic goals and key performance indicators into a series of contributory goals for each part of the organization that will positively improve its performance. Progress against these is monitored, including forward-looking indicators and forecasts. The results are measured and fed back up the organization to be compared with plan. Corrective action can be taken and the same cycle used to measure its effectiveness.

One of the most powerful aspects of

performance management is that each individual or group of individuals is given their own objectives that they can influence and that are completely complementary to all others in the organization. These are measured and incorporated into the reward scheme to encourage them to behave in a way that will contribute towards the overall objectives.

Performance management systems must encompass planning, budgeting, forecasting, reporting, financial consolidation, activity-based costing/management, scorecards, dashboards, portals, modelling, analysis, tax planning and treasury planning. These must be aligned with each other and share the same information architecture.

"There are all sorts of exciting things going on at the leading edge," says Richard Creeth, president of Creeth, Richman and Associates, a BI

consultancy. "Some people have excellent integrated systems with data very accessible through dashboards, spreadsheet clients and different client tools doing sophisticated applications."

However, he says that the sad reality is that the vast majority of organizations are still trying to get their data into a structured environment that lets them 'slice and dice' and analyze the data. The difficulty is that data is coming from too many places and is stored in too many formats. There is a lot of work to standardize and align it and mergers and acquisitions complicate it. "Most vendors are not competing against each other, but with spreadsheets," says Nigel Pendse, editor of The OLAP Report and author of The BI Survey.

When deployed pervasively through all parts of the organizations operations, BI can transform performance by closely aligning all activities and behaviors with an overall corporate strategy. "Everybody has a part to play in the strength of the business," says Don Campbell, chief technology officer at Cognos. "They can all add their little nugget of value and it will all contribute to a common strategy."



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www.insightdecision.com



Michael Saylor is president and chief executive officer of MicroStrategy.

Information-Driven Decisions

BI is needed to make sense of vast quantities of operational data, says Michael Saylor.

In the highly competitive retail industry, retailers turn to business intelligence for insights into the vast amounts of data they collect. This covers all aspects of their operations, from supply chains to product sales to store operations. Retailers must analyze and report on this data to make information-driven business decisions. For example, Lowe's Companies

uses business intelligence to manage inventory, improve margins, review market specificity and identify sales opportunities. It is used by thousands of employees across all departments, including logistics, merchandising, marketing, store operations, finance, human resources and distribution. Lowe's has 22 business intelligence applications and its primary data

warehouse contains more than 20 terabytes of data, having grown by more than 20 percent per year over the past few years.

As an example, Lowe's uses BI to track millions of store items against billions of transaction records to assist in managing stock levels at its 1,550 stores. The resulting analysis helps Lowe's to keep stock

levels at the optimum level to support store sales at any given point in time. Lowe's also uses BI to help its suppliers and vendors monitor the performance of their products. Using a secure web-based interface, they can view sales and inventory data on their own product lines.

Lowe's runs more than 250,000 BI reports each week. They help to improve merchandising decisions, reduce costs and provide better customer service.



John Thompson is president at Kognitio

'Train of Thought' Analysis

Superior underlying BI technology can bring competitive advantage through more powerful analysis, says John Thompson.

Consumer packaged goods suppliers need to analyze the performance of their product ranges by analyzing detailed check-out data. However, the data volumes are such that the industry practice is to work on a 10% sample of data.

Loyalty Management Group in the United

Kingdom, which owns and operates the well known Air Miles and Nectar loyalty programmes, is able to achieve competitive advantage by offering them the full data set. It uses WX₂, our analytical database, to anonymously analyze every single transaction for the last two years.

Its combination of fine detail and high performance is unique in its industry. For instance, a manufacturer can analyze the relative performance of any product against its competition. It can report on customers' behavior, the types of products being sold and the likelihood of a customer switching products.

Performance is such that analysis takes only minutes, giving near real-time 'train of thought' analysis. Manufacturers can analyze product sales and the effectiveness of

any marketing campaigns and promotions. They can get a real advantage on their competitors by gaining unparalleled levels of insight on customer behavior, spend and buying habits at their fingertips giving them true data agility.

Loyalty Management Group has already sold its analysis service to a significant number of leading manufacturers. It is now planning to exploit its powerful BI infrastructure by making it available to a wider retail audience in other geographies.

True Business Intelligence

To be truly effective, BI must integrate internal and external structured and unstructured data.

Since it was developed 25 years ago, business intelligence has concentrated on using structured internal data to support decision-making. It has used the power of computers to provide as much context as possible around actual reported performance, by comparing it with other reported figures, plans, budgets, forecasts, trends and so on.

However, an IDC/Teradata survey of 1,000 respondents in 2007 revealed that more than half of the information

they deal with for decision-making is unstructured. Typically only 20% of information in an organization is structured.

"Ignoring unstructured data is a tremendous lost opportunity," says Sohaib Abbasi, chief executive of Informatica, a data integration software vendor. "However leveraging it is a tremendous opportunity to gain future competitive advantage."

Managers need to access key information from the 80% internally that is

unstructured, as well as external, within electronic mail messages, word processing documents, web pages, presentations, images, maps, plans, drawings, audio, video, etc. They also need external structured data from databases, financial statements, etc.

The vendors have always offered functionality to include text and electronic mail, but there has been little exploitation by customers. With its recent acquisition of Cognos, IBM now has a strong 'Information on Demand' vision that combines the Cognos BI platform with IBM's long history of data warehousing and its FileNet content management acquisition.

Mark LaRow, vice president of products at MicroStrategy, is cautious. "There is still a basic need just to get people the numbers before integrating them," he says. "It is like putting the icing on a cake that doesn't yet exist, so first you need to bake the cake."

Google Finance is a good example of what can eventually be achieved. It displays structured stock market data, share price graph, management ratios and competitive statistical performance comparisons. This is combined with unstructured press releases, published comment, blog and community site comments. All can be 'drilled' into for further analysis.

Until deep integration of BI and document management is achieved, portal software can provide users with

a similar experience. A 'dashboard' gives an instant structured snapshot of the state of the business and unstructured data includes news text.

Don Campbell, chief technology officer at Cognos, says that managers should make their business decisions in the context of how they work. They shouldn't have to stop what they are doing to go off and 'do some business intelligence,' and then come back later to continue to do what they were doing.

"It should be part of the same workflow as the user's electronic mail, strategy document and customer survey data," he says. "Instead of separate BI and unstructured worlds, all the data should come together as part of the decision-making process to drive the business forward."

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A Single Version of the Truth

Transaction processing systems can't support decision-making, so a different architecture is required.

Powerful transaction processing systems gather huge amounts of information about customers. However, data about the same customer is spread around the organization and the systems are designed for quick data entry, not complex reporting.

"Managers want to summarise data, perform calculations and view historical trends," says Nigel Pendse, author of *The BI Survey*. "They may want to restate history under today's organizational or product structure and compare data from more than one system. Our survey shows that they want information immediately and the way data is organized in transaction systems makes fast queries physically impossible - and would actually slow down the system for transaction processing."

When they adopt BI, organizations build an entire information infrastructure that allows them to make accurate and timely historical and forward-looking information available to users throughout the organization, supporting their role in the achievement of corporate objectives. Key data from transaction systems is checked for accuracy and duplication and transferred into a separate database, called a 'data warehouse.' These are usually customer-centric and

enable powerful customer analysis to drive highly targeted and personalized marketing campaigns.

Summarised data is transferred into a series of smaller 'data marts.' These provide management information at corporate and departmental level, usually referred to as a 'single version of the truth.' These databases are often multidimensional, known as 'On-Line Analytical Processing' (OLAP) servers. In smaller organizations summarized data can be transferred direct from the transaction processing systems into the OLAP database.

The database is accessed through software designed to allow end users to work interactively with the data, 'slicing and dicing' it to analyze it and identify variances and 'drilling down' to more detail in order to find the cause. Typical applications include querying, modelling, planning/budgeting/forecasting, reporting, financial consolidation, activity-based costing/management, scorecards, dashboards, portals, analysis, tax planning, treasury planning and risk management.

Greg Todd, executive director at Accenture Information Management Services, welcomes the number of different access tools from different vendors that are available, including complex statistical analysis, predictive models, data visualization and geospatial analysis. "As the market matures," he says, "we are seeing more tools that help our clients to drive their competitive advantage."



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A Regulatory Infrastructure

BI systems can be valuable tools for compliance.

Compliance is a cost that adds no value to organizations. With new requirements coming along all the time, it is important to minimize the cost of producing information for external parties.

Unfortunately, there is a tendency for legal and financial people to create specific solutions to meet specific requirements. Organizations that are best able to respond to new demands use their existing software tools to create a 'compliance infrastructure.'

This encompasses the general ledger, workflow, collaboration, document management, business process management and business intelligence systems. These all have flexibility and strong audit trails that support the regulatory processes.

"The most important aspect of compliance is data quality," says Greg Todd, executive director at Accenture Information Management Services. "BI policies and procedure ensure that the data is accurate."

BI systems provide a multi-dimensional database and rigorous underlying data management processes. These ensure that information can be gathered from a wide range of systems, checked for accuracy and reported in any way that the regulator wants.

"A piecemeal approach at least doubles the cost of complying with each regulation," warns Nigel Rayner, research vice president at Gartner Group. "It misses the economies of scale from systems infrastructure, design and maintenance. Work to meet one compliance requirement can anticipate future regulatory requirements."

Compliance will only ever increase in the modern business world and organizations must respond quickly and cheaply to whatever demands will be thrown at them in future. "The goal is to automate as much as possible," says Todd, "and have the confidence to submit data externally."

Objectivity Goes a Long Way

Consultants combine deep business and technology skills to bring BI success.

The traditional survey of user-needs that kicks off design of a transaction processing system is meaningless for a BI system. The whole point of BI is to harness the power of computers to allow managers to do things with data that they have never done before. Most users will have little experience of using computers to present information graphically and dynamically, so will not know what they want.

The trick is to understand the business problems they are dealing with and then to design a system that will solve those problems. Such skill is very rare internally, so external consultants have thrived.

"Specialist consultants bring a deeper understanding of specific business problems, as well as a deep understanding of the technology," says Richard Creeth, president of Creeth, Richman and Associates, a specialist BI consultancy. "Few of the large consultancies have senior people with a technical understanding, who seem to be in small and mid-sized consultancies."

Some vendors have their own consultants, who can be very helpful in building the technology. Some consultants resell software and are excellent at understanding the business issues, but limit the technology choices. Some consultancies are fully independent.

"Clients appreciate the fact that we are vendor-knowledgeable, but vendor-neutral," says Jill Dyché, a partner with Baseline Consulting. "We know all the big players, are briefed by them, and attend their user conferences, but we will not re-sell any product. That objectivity goes a long way in BI."

According to *BI Survey 7*, edited by Nigel Pendse, the most successful BI projects spent between \$50k and \$100k on external consulting. "Projects led by specialist BI consultants did best, delivering the highest level of business benefits," he says. "They were better than average in every single category."

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Email: sachit.murthy@manthansystems.com
Phone: 312-893-5860



Towards Petabytes

High data volumes need to be carefully managed.

Managing the vast volumes of data in BI systems brings a whole set of unique problems, starting with security. The challenge isn't to prevent access, but to ensure that people can easily access only the data they need.

"It is not like locking a door to keep out people that shouldn't be there," says Don Campbell, chief technology officer at Cognos. "It is slicing the information so people can get at the parts of the information that are relevant to their role. It might be appropriate for a sales executive to know

about their own region and the entire country, but nothing in between." Ensuring that BI systems are always available for decision-making is another challenge. Data is typically stored on parallel redundant systems. This keeps them running and avoids the need for back-up to an external location, which is physically impossible because data volumes are so great.

With growing data volumes, archiving is also a problem. "It used to be just transactional data, but it now includes web-based information, unstructured contents and documents," says Greg Todd, executive director at Accenture Information Management Services. "Archiving policies and procedures are a big discussion point for our clients. Because storage has become less expensive, a lot of them are storing all data. However, if there is a performance issue they accelerate archival. Clients have multiple terabyte system and are preparing for future multiple petabyte systems!"

Business Intelligence Network: Bringing BI Expertise to Your Desktop

It's no secret that business intelligence (BI) applications and technologies enable organizations to make more informed business decisions and provide the strategic advantage they need in today's competitive marketplace. Consequently, every company must make a determined effort to seek out comprehensive resources that help them effectively use business intelligence. One truly comprehensive resource is the Business Intelligence Network.

Ron Powell and Shawn Rogers founded the company in 2004 to give readers a one-stop resource for all of their BI needs. The Business Intelligence Network has sites throughout the world, including the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France and Spain. "Ron and I are committed to helping readers stay in touch with hot topics and reality on the ground in business intelligence markets here and overseas," says Shawn Rogers. "We find it interesting to explore established and newly emerging business intelligence technologies and sharing best practices with the audience."

In addition to timely articles, news and research, the Network offers readers a chance to embrace Web 2.0 technologies. All of the sites utilize the most advanced technology available for delivery of content over the web, including RSS feeds, expert-hosted blogs, audio-driven interviews and podcasting. Users can read articles, pick up the latest research, check out daily blogs, subscribe to relevant newsletters and download audio podcasts to their MP3 players.

For more information please visit www.BeyeNETWORK.com

BI author advises both business and IT clients to focus on enterprise data.

When Baseline Consulting partner Jill Dyché talks to her clients, the conversation barely touches technology. "Most of our clients know a lot about BI reporting tools," Dyché claims. "That's the easy part of BI."

Few consultants would be brave enough to use "BI" and "easy" in the same sentence. Dyché maintains that business users are becoming savvier and more financially autonomous. "For better or worse, business people have their own discretionary IT spending now," she says. Combine this self-sufficiency with emerging hosted and opensource BI offerings and business user independence is practically inevitable.

So where does Dyché see opportunity with BI? "The real challenge is in integrating the data," she says. We saw the problem during the early days of CRM (Dyché's book, *The CRM Handbook*, was a best-seller). Companies would invest in expensive technologies only to discover they had lots of new functionality but the same inaccurate, invalid, or missing customer details.

The bad PR and overinvestment resulting from failed CRM, expensive data warehouse efforts, and inaccurate BI reports have led some executives full-circle back to corporate data. "We're talking to executives about managing data as an asset," Dyché explains, "and they're listening. After all, data is bigger than just BI—it requires its own skills, tools, and infrastructure." The bonus? "If data is the hard part, IT becomes a service to the enterprise. That's more strategic than generating reports."

Jill Dyché is a partner and co-founder of Baseline Consulting. Her most recent book is *Customer Data Integration: Reaching a Single Version of the Truth* (John Wiley & Sons, 2006).

A Lick and a Promise

By Lia Szep, Syncsort Incorporated

The stack of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) seems to grow as fast as the processing slows. Deadlines slip away and the head scratching begins. Knowing it's not a permanent fix, you hammer out a few code tweaks and skip in just enough hardware to stay within budget. But as hundreds of thousands of records turn into millions, you quickly realize

that your 'quick fix' amounts to little more than 'a lick and a promise'.

Get Back to Basics. Information delivery comes down to two things: data integration (DI) and business intelligence (BI). With two major players on the field — data producers and data consumers — a company's success comes in part from its abil-

ity to get data from the hands of one, to those of the other. The faster you can process customer and market data, the better you can anticipate and respond to changing business trends. The key to getting the most out of your BI solution is finding the right DI tool. This isn't all that difficult, if you keep in mind a few basic objectives.

Cut Processing Time. A BI solution empowers business users to make critical business decisions. But even the best BI solution is worthless if the data becomes stale. The faster a DI tool, the more timely and actionable the data; so look for a solution that speeds querying and quickly creates and loads aggregate tables.

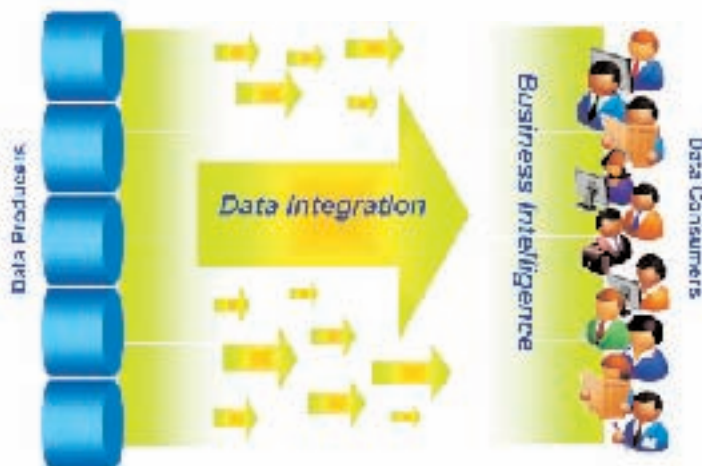
Reduce Total Cost of Ownership. People sometimes add hardware to solve performance problems. If a DI tool is strong enough, you can reduce the amount of hardware resources required to support powerful processing — plain and simple.

Test the Solution. Before committing to a purchase, test the

product in your own environment, with your own data. Needs are never the same and this is the best way to identify the best solution for you. If, for example, you are dealing with a vast amount of data on disparate sources, then you'll want to find a solution that runs on multiple platforms and provides support for different sources and targets.

Ease-of-Use. User interfaces are severely underrated, particularly in business built on hard-coding. When it comes down to it, a product that is easy to use can help control the cost and time of training new staff members who are not likely hard-coders.

Bottom Line. With success so dependent on business intelligence, a complete, open system, information delivery solution should be a top priority. Only a full solution — not a quick fix — can give users across the enterprise the actionable data they need — now, where, and wherever they need it.



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