



# Enlightening WITH Intelligence

IT managers grapple with the challenges of empowering their organisations through business intelligence solutions

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# Barriers to BI

**Sanjay Mehta, CEO** of MAIA Intelligence, highlights the barriers preventing IT managers from adopting business intelligence, while delving into its innovations and capabilities

## What is the state of adoption of BI by IT heads?

As Indian companies witness a yearly growth of 25 to 30 per cent, the need for business intelligence (BI) tools and services to create smarter, more agile and efficient businesses, is increasing. The BI software market is estimated to reach \$65.4 mn in 2011, up by 15.7 per cent from 2010. There is increased adoption of BI tools across industry verticals, owing to increased competition and globalisation, which paves way for increased productivity.

## What are the barriers to adoption of BI?

Cost and complexity barriers restrict user adoption and deployment across the enterprise. Data migration and integration are also the most potent inhibiting factors to BI adoption. Other challenges are departmental silos, data access, clean data, employee resistance, lack of business rules, etc. Getting the right data quality and one version of the truth and also ineffective data governance are other obstacles to adoption.

Additionally, the take up of BI is being hindered by: employees resistant to change; cultural resistance; lack of understanding of BI role in improving business; lack of bandwidth due to competing priorities; lack

of skills internally in the line of business; and the fact that existing cultures do not encourage sharing of information.

## Elaborate the steps involved in making environment Business Intelligence ready.

The prerequisites for a BI deployment are ensuring that data is clean; business users are effectively trained and shortlisting and selecting a BI tool which gets deployed quickly and is able to adjust as you go. IT managers should deploy BI with the clear idea that there are numbers out there that they need to find, and know roughly where they might be.

Post-deployment, IT managers should initially not spend a huge amount of time upfront developing the perfect reports because needs will grow as the business evolves. While building a data warehouse, IT managers need to take an integrated approach from the beginning and ensure that they are not locking themselves into an unworkable data strategy further down the road.

## Elaborate on the capabilities of BI tools to address vertical-specific needs.

There are two types of verticalisation



happening in the BI space. One in consolidation, and the other in terms of industry segments. Both are taking place on the established grounds that BI verticalisation does not make sense for a few generics. Financial consolidation is seeing many knitted BI solutions coming its way. Due to heavy M&A activity and a stricter regulatory environment, all branches, subsidiaries and sister concerns of organisations have to have some common financial binding. That is where BI is capturing the screen space. The other area is amongst industries such as BFSI, pharmaceuticals and telcos, and a few others where templates are generated. Industries like manufacturing, BFSI, pharma and healthcare, logistics and retail are some of the early adopters of BI in India.

**What kind of profit opportunities and productivity gains has this created for IT managers?**

BI resolves reporting challenges such as creating one version of the truth, enables information self-service and creates meaningful data rollups for users. It also seamlessly integrates changes to business and consolidates multiple systems across the enterprise.

**What are the top trends that you see in the BI space?**

Quite a few trends like self-service, real-time analytics, on-the-go data visualisation and business intelligence through mobile platforms are shaping up in BI space. All types of critical decisions – buying, selling, monitoring and optimising – are being made on the fly. BI on rich internet application (RIA) technology is evolving; mobility will be an important trend to deliver information on PDAs. The tool has the capability to send the report figures through an SMS gateway.

**What kind of business benefits have you observed using BI tools?**

Some of the business benefits gained by our customers include regulatory and compliance adherence, enhanced sales revenue by identifying cross-sell and up-sell opportunities, better and clearer assessment of non-financial revenue and costs and an increase in IT and business process productivity. IT managers have saved costs through building reports into the core business application (transaction reporting) and focussing more on the core development of other productive applications rather than allotting time to the frequent report requests from the business users across their organisations.

Intangible benefits accrued through BI are performance improvement, time savings, greater

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—Sanjay Mehta, CEO, MAIA Intelligence

business knowledge, improved work processes and more effective relationships.

**What steps need to be taken to manage workflow smartly?**

Organisations must understand and address critical challenges to manage workflow smartly in a BI environment. The BI project

has to be recognised as a cross-organisational business initiative and it needs to be understood that, as such, it differs from typical standalone solutions. The project should follow a breakdown structure and a methodology. Business requirements should be analysed and business activities standardised. Dirty data should be tackled before making it ready for BI, as this may drastically affect business profitability. The necessity for and the use of meta-data should also be understood well.

**Is consumerisation of BI for real? How?**

BI is still too elitist and growing too slow. Currently, it is in the corporate arena and needs to move to the consumer arena. How can we change this paradigm? How can BI affect consumers’ daily lives and affect decision-making as it does with internet searches or in the way Web 2.0 is doing? How can BI become a utility for decision-making with consumer BI applications being developed? Currently, our decisions are based on opinions, recommendations, advertisements and surveys and not actual data, which is measured or analysed. BI can drive consumerisation if segments across the enterprise rely on their own internal data to set goals.

**What innovations do you observe in BI?**

We have already started exploring the Web 2.0-based technology wave of RIA-based BI. Business users had never experienced this kind of intuitive GUI before. They loved this kind of sexy-looking dashboard dancing to their whims and fancies.

**What are your plans for BI?**

Our effort is to create something that is:

- Simple: The right interfaces for the right people at the right time
- Seamless: Tightly integrated with data sources, applications and business processes
- Social: Allows people to collaborate around analysing information and making decisions
- Strategic: Closes the loop between strategy and execution

The roadmap for the future is on-demand BI and embedded Business Intelligence. **ITNEXT**

