

"BI market was much less affected by the economic crisis"

Sanjay Mehta, MAIA Intelligence --



Express Channel Business talked to Sanjay Mehta, CEO, MAIA Intelligence Pvt. Ltd, to find out how BI has done till now and its prospects

How has the BI market done so far? What are the expectations from this technology going forward?

Businesses want information that is more timely and useful, particularly if it can feed directly into growth and profitability. BI has emerged as core tool guiding decisions and strategies for areas as diverse as marketing, credit, R&D, customer care and inventory management.

According to Forrester Research, the BI market is much less affected by the current economic crisis than most other software markets and will continue to grow to \$14 billion by 2014, up from about \$9.4 billion this year. The market research firm predicts that new categories of advanced analytics will fuel growth and merge into the core BI market, including business performance solutions, text analytics, predictive analytics, and complex event processing.

What are the challenges while selling BI?

Too often, BI resources are drawn from traditional IT pools. Most of these people have experience with transactional systems and databases supporting transactional systems. The design and operation of a data warehouse to support BI is fundamentally different and requires not only a different skill set but a different mindset.

Some can appreciate the difference and are able to apply their experience with transaction-oriented, real-time systems to the BI environment. Many cannot. BI requires greater understanding of how the business works. Building Standard Business Value libraries and Master Data sets needs a contextual basis. Good technical skills do not necessarily translate into good BI skills. Eventually, the data warehouse personnel, who work most closely with business users, develop considerable business knowledge. In the interim, IT resources and business users must work closely together to ensure that this divide is bridged.

What are the deployment challenges involved in BI?

With the hand holding and training that the partner team gets while signing up for a partnership under the program, there is hardly any challenge that a partner might come across.

If a partner has good domain knowledge and understands the customer's business processes well, the BI project is bound to be successful. The project management and resources deployed like the BI consultant should have sound knowledge of IT, warehousing, query, etc. On the product part, the reports are easily configurable and the run-time is customizable as per user requirements.

What are the best practices that MAIA adopts while dealing with BI?

MAIA Intelligence has seen customers asking for real time reporting rather than waiting for big bang data warehouse modeling where issues of data integration were a concern. As the business is changing very quickly 'near enough is good enough' for business users. They expect quick reporting and analytics rather than waiting for a large data warehouse to get ready and then use the same.

We help customers with real time reporting on their OLTP data wherein latency is reduced and action is visible. Customers are looking for mass customized solutions rather than box packs. In this model of customization, solutions are made and consumed simultaneously. It is much easier to create a big marketing program, but it will not solve the critical question of whether your company's product is valuable enough for your customers.

A good first step is to form cross-functional teams for BI projects. When left entirely to IT, the success of projects is often measured by cost and speed of implementation.

Regardless of what BI tools customers deploy, once users recognize the value of reliable, consistent data they make demands for data latency to be reduced further. Planning a 'services' approach for BI means that data loads can be automatically managed by continuously monitoring all warehouse processes and respond rapidly to issues such as data loading failures and long query response times.

What are the sectors that could be the major adopters of BI?

We see a lot of BI adoption happening in manufacturing, BFSI, pharma and healthcare, cargo terminal marine ports and the retail segment. On a horizontal front, we have proven cases on a SAP or Tally user base. Our software works as a complement to the ERP or management application that extracts data, builds reports and analyzes the data providing crucial business information.

When it comes to the adoption of BI, how mature is the enterprise market? Also how has the adoption rate in the mid-size market been?

The growth of BI across and specifically in the Indian market reflects a demand from customers who, after spending years creating systems to record data and transactions, want to get more mileage out of that information.

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