

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Business Intelligence for everyone

BI for operations is great, but don't ignore the fundamentals

■ By Jamsheed Gandhi

Business Intelligence (BI) is knowledge, and the value of that knowledge is in how quickly and accurately it can be applied to a business problem or an emerging opportunity. Usage of BI tools within local organization varies, depending on their industry type and the maturity of their IT infrastructure as well. The deployment scenario varies from just pure play query and reporting to areas where BI is being deployed for strategic decision making. It is important for an organization to view BI not only a query and reporting tool but also to think of it as a strategic initiative which marries the areas of Data Integration, Intelligence storage, Analytics and finally BI," says Ashit Panjwani, Director, SAS Institute.

Today, BI tools not only help mine data, analyze, generate reports but also cross-analyze and probe into the data for better analysis, thereby reducing the turn-around time for decision-making. Having established themselves in the strategic realm, BI tools and applications are making their mark in the operational and tactical realms.

Sanjay Mehta, CEO, MAIA Intelligence says, "What's driving the use of BI tools and applications in the hands of the functional users is the reduction in cost of these tools as well as empowerment of employees within the company for making decisions. As decision making now permeates through out the organization, it is critical to business continuity that data is collated and results delivered immediately."

Zoeb Adenwala, CIO, Essel Propack says, "CIOs want BI solutions that are fast, simple and economical." Essel Propack has implemented BI at the operational level. "We now have proactive reports as against reactive ones. What-If scenarios, Drill-Up, Drill-Down, Dashboards, KPI, have all made the BI tool reach into the hands of senior management and CEOs. It is now being used on a day-to-day basis," says Adenwala.

BASICS REMAIN

However, the fundamental challenge of any BI imple-

mentation is data quality and operational BI isn't an exception. According to a Gartner report, 60-70 percent of the BI challenge is about cleansing the data, getting it out, transforming it correctly, and storing it in a properly designed warehouse. Today, many businesses are on the path of growth, and the addition of new applications, databases, regulations and access points for data create new challenges with regard to data quality. Moreover, users are demanding integrated data at real time, integrated structured and unstructured data, real time data analytics, etc.

Enterprises need to realize that data quality is a problem and accept it. This acceptance will help them to think of data quality as a proactive thought rather than an after-thought. It implies that they would start looking at data quality right at the capture process rather than later.

NEW TRENDS

BI vendors will be increasingly compelled deliver to new technology and infrastructure developments. Panjwani says, "With Wi-Fi becoming prevalent, users are not tethered at their desks. Thus, there is an opportunity to get BI closer to the point of interaction. Secondly, organizations will increasingly move away from transactional database systems to implement fully integrated enterprise intelligence platforms that can efficiently disseminate intelligence across the organizations. Just as an ERP platform is needed for the operational side of the business, a fully integrated enterprise intelligence platform is and will continue to be needed for the intelligence side of the business. Thirdly, organizations will increasingly demand industry solutions -from telecom to banking to manufacturing that will be at the heart of their enterprise intelligence strategies."

Following the consolidation trend in BI industry, Gartner advises end-users to hold strategic investments until a product roadmap has been clearly presented from the vendor. ■

