



This article appeared in the Jan • Feb • Mar 2010 issue of *SAPinsider* (<http://sapinsider.wispubs.com>) and appears here with permission from the publisher, Wellesley Information Services (WIS).



Increase the Impact of Your BI Investment

Take Advantage of the SAP Ecosystem to Drive Business Change

The real value of business intelligence (BI) software lies not only within the tools themselves, but in how the tools are used. Driving business process change – that is, truly altering and improving how your business operates – requires the best and most appropriate tools *and* the right mix of skills and knowledge to use them.

Research bears this out. Before joining SAP, I initiated and led a major study on the financial impact of BI and helped execute a follow-up study several years after. The conclusion drawn from these detailed studies was crystal clear: The greatest financial impact of BI comes from enabling business process change.

To deliver effective change, you need to bring together the right minds – *quickly*. SAP customers are turning to the SAP ecosystem for answers on how to get the greatest financial return from their BI systems. Only the SAP ecosystem provides a robust environment that joins customers, partners, and SAP, and actively engages them all to work collaboratively to maximize their BI investments in the shortest timeframe – and at the lowest cost.

BI Momentum in the SAP Ecosystem

From the beginning, the SAP ecosystem has been one of the most popular resources for the exchange of information and knowledge about SAP business intelligence solutions.¹ When SAP acquired Business Objects, the ecosystem quickly ramped up to deliver consistent, high-quality information about the acquisition and its resulting strategy and roadmap.

The SAP ecosystem is the umbrella over a diverse set of orchestrated activities and easily accessible resources that help customers of all sizes – from Fortune 100 companies to small and medium

enterprises (SMEs) – evaluate, select, implement, and optimize SAP and SAP BusinessObjects solutions.²

Within the ecosystem, SAP constantly works with partners to develop offers for customers to help them address specific issues or needs. For example, SAP worked with HP and Intel to develop the SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse Accelerator (SAP NetWeaver BW Accelerator), an in-memory appliance that speeds up the SAP BusinessObjects Explorer experience to Google-like proportions, transforming reporting from days to seconds and helping companies better instigate change.

Complementing the ecosystem's partnering activities, the most robust and highly utilized resource for SAP BusinessObjects customers is the **SAP Community Network (SCN)**, a dynamic repository of forums and blogs devoted to all things SAP. Every day, thousands of SAP customers turn to SCN to find business opportunities and solutions to their technological challenges. One of the fastest growing communities in the network is the SAP BusinessObjects community; since January 2008, this community has grown tenfold. What follows are examples of how SAP customers have been relying on this community to enable business change.

The SAP Community Network: Open, Honest, and Impactful

By connecting with peers, consultants, and SAP staff who have real-world experience managing SAP business intelligence solutions, SAP customers can quickly solve issues that, in the past, would have added unnecessary expense or unwanted delays. Questions posed in the SCN forums can be answered in hours, not days, by a huge pool of knowledgeable experts.



Steve Graham (s.graham@sap.com) is Vice President of Global Ecosystem Marketing at SAP AG. Prior to joining SAP, Steve led IDC's Global Software Business Strategies practice. He has published research and delivered presentations on topics including technology ecosystems, partner-to-partner networks, software industry globalization, shifting technology industry business models, and intellectual property trends in the software industry.

"There's a great deal of information available through the SAP BusinessObjects community on how companies can solve just about any kind of problem they face. It's amazing that it's all available for free."

— SAP consultant

¹ For an overview of the SAP ecosystem, please see my article "The Best Investment" in the October-December 2009 issue of *SAPinsider* (sapinsider.wispubs.com).

² For detailed information about SAP BusinessObjects offerings within the SAP ecosystem, please visit www.sdn.sap.com/irj/boc/explorer.

The most important component for many SAP customers is the detailed information and unflinchingly honest feedback that SCN offers, all with measurable business impact. SAP customers and partners have repeatedly testified to the positive impact that the communities have had on their SAP BusinessObjects implementations on different levels:

- **Trusted information.** The communities serve up honest feedback from trusted sources, providing unique and meaningful value for participants.

“Reading what other customers said about these [SAP BusinessObjects portfolio] products gave me confidence that the products would work as promised. It’s uncensored, so we could trust the information and move ahead with confidence.”

— IT Studies Manager, cable and wire manufacturer

- **Technical information.** SAP communities bring together some of the brightest technical minds to help customers address their system challenges.

“We wanted technical information, step-by-step instructions on how to get [SAP BusinessObjects solutions and SAP ERP] to work together, and objective information about what works and what doesn’t. Our partner pointed us to trusted resources on the SAP BusinessObjects community that gave us just what we needed to make informed decisions and implement the software successfully.”

— Managing Director, office supplies manufacturer

- **Measurable impact.** Nothing kills a project’s momentum faster than unresolved issues that linger and fester. Many SAP customers have testified that they found answers within SCN that were directly attributable to completing projects on time, on budget, and within scope.

“Before using the SAP BusinessObjects community, it took us two weeks to solve a typical problem. ... Now, we get instant solutions by searching forums or reaching out to SAP mentors and other experts. There’s no doubt that these resources help us consistently deliver projects on time and within budget.”

— Head of Project Management Office, energy generating equipment company

Providing Valuable Information About Tomorrow’s Solutions Today

Forewarned is forearmed. Your business changes daily, and you frequently find yourself in uncharted waters. You want to know what potential challenges or unique business opportunities lie ahead, and you want to know if SAP BusinessObjects solutions hold the key to getting a jump on your competition.

SCN is great for not only finding solutions to issues with pinpoint accuracy, but also gaining intelligence about SAP solutions that will help you with the challenges and opportunities you’ll encounter in the future.

Growing Your Knowledge While Growing Your Business

SCN encourages people who have expertise in a specific area to share their knowledge, which when combined with the knowledge of other highly skilled participants, helps customers arrive at a better solution. Top contributors can become SAP Mentors, an elite group of high-value SCN members who receive special access to SAP senior management, get advanced insight into product roadmaps, and share their deep knowledge with ecosystem participants.

For example, in the SAP BusinessObjects solutions arena, SAP Mentor Ingo Hilgefort has developed a considerable following, effectively interacting with tens of thousands of people. His blog posts routinely have in excess of 5,000 hits and have achieved upwards of 43,000 page views. His authoritative responses to questions posted by SAP customers have been collected as best practices.³

By sharing knowledge on forums and in other SAP ecosystem venues, SAP customers can broaden their experience and boost their value to the organization.

The SAP Ecosystem: Fueling Business Change That Can Impact Financial Results

The SAP ecosystem enables companies to harness the broad capabilities of SAP, partners, and customers to deliver business change, not only from their SAP BusinessObjects BI solutions, but also across the entire spectrum of SAP. This change equates to improved ROI, as SAP customers leverage the ecosystem to maximize the value they get from their SAP systems. It’s a value unique to SAP’s ecosystem; you simply can’t find this type of momentum elsewhere. ■

³ Ingo Hilgefort will be profiled in *SAPinsider*’s sister publication, *insiderPROFILES*, in its April-June 2010 issue (insiderPROFILES.wispubs.com).

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For more SCN user feedback, see “SAP Community Network: Accelerating Time to Value with the SAP BusinessObjects Community,” available by search at www.sdn.sap.com/irj/scn/articles-topic.