

New Dimensions for Reporting



Applies to:

SAP BW3.5 and SAP BI7.0 Reporting users for Effective Decision making. For more information, visit the [Business Intelligence homepage](#).

Summary

This Document highlights various reporting tools available in SAP BI space with their features and gives business user option to choose any of the tools depending on their specific needs. It includes comparison chart listing down their various features.

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Created on: 13 Sep 2009

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Introduction

Companies today face the challenge of having a plethora of information available from disparate sources. Even when useful data is available, you're often too overwhelmed to find it, and IT is too busy to deliver.

Every hour of the day, users need to answer ad hoc questions and access business information. Many find it difficult to access critical business information that's not contained in standard reports. Requests for additional views of the data or for up-to-date information often result in user frustration and report backlog. Even when ad hoc query functionalities are available, they are typically difficult to use and don't provide user with a simple way of exploring information to gain a better understanding of critical business issues.

With list of reporting tools explained below users can perform self service access to data, reporting and intuitive information analysis, all in one product. This helps them to turn business insights into effective decisions. With a few clicks, users can access and format information and then analyze it to understand trends and root cause affecting their business.

SAP BEx Analyzer

Features:

- The BEx Analyzer is the Business Explorer analytical, reporting, and design tool embedded in Microsoft Excel.
- Perform OLAP functionality such as filtering, drilling, and sorting.
- Perform planning functionality.
- Precalculate and distribute workbooks with the BEx Broadcaster.
- For advanced programming capabilities, embed your own customized VBA programs (Visual Basic for Applications). It can be used to insert button functionality in the workbooks.
- Analysis mode allows you to perform OLAP analysis of queries and analyze selected InfoProvider data by navigating interactively within the queries.
- Design mode is used for designing the interface for query applications.
- Design the interface for your queries by embedding design items such as the analysis grid, dropdown boxes, radio button groups, and buttons into your Microsoft Excel workbook.
- In the BEx Analyzer, you use the Analysis Grid design item for manual planning. Users can use them to manually enter or change values using input ready cells.
- In BEx Analyzer the system uses a predefined MS Excel format template (SAPBEXinputData) to support users in visualizing the input-ready cells. You can format this according to your requirements so that you can distinguish input-ready cells from cells that are not input ready.
- It allows users to combine many queries into a workbook in the Excel format thus getting desired huge data in different worksheets.
- Users can save workbooks in your favorites or in your role on the server, or locally on your computer.

SAP Web application Designer

Features:

- BEx Web Application Designer allows you to use generic OLAP navigation for your BI data in Web applications as well as in business intelligence cockpits for simple or highly individual scenarios.
- Web application design comprises a broad spectrum of Web-based business intelligence scenarios, which you can adjust to meet your individual needs using standard Web technologies.
- In BEx Web Application Designer, the desktop application can be used to create Web applications, to generate HTML pages that contain BI-specific contents such as tables, charts or maps.
- Web Applications are based on Web Templates that allow you to create and edit in the Web Application Designer. You can save the Web templates and access them from the Web Browser or the portal.
- Business Explorer Web application design allows you to create highly individual scenarios with user-defined interface elements by using standard markup languages and the Web design API.
- Users can represent data in forms such as Table, Bar chart, pie chart, line chart and 3d chart. It also provides option to swap axes to view data according to different scenarios.
- It gives liberty to users so as to perform various functions with the report such as Inserting conditions, creating Exceptions and creating filters at runtime i.e. after the report is published on the portal.
- You can call up the Ad-hoc Query Designer and define new queries or change an existing query on the Web.
- You can set a bookmark that enables you to call up a certain navigational state for the query at a later date. The system creates a URL for the bookmark. This URL is displayed in the address line of your Web browser.
- You can export query data to MS Excel or export the query data into a CSV (comma separated value) file.

SAP BEx Web Analyzer

Features:

- The BEx Web Analyzer is a standalone, convenient Web application for data analysis that you can call using a URL or as an iView in the portal.
- The Web Analyzer allows you to execute ad hoc analyses on the Web: When you have selected a data provider (query, query view, InfoProvider, external data source), the data is displayed in a table with a navigation pane.
- In the Web Analyzer, you can save the data view generated from navigation and analysis as a query view by choosing Save View in the context menu, and you can save the ad hoc analysis by choosing Save As. When the query view is saved, only the data view is saved; when the ad hoc analysis is saved, the entire Web application is saved, including the properties of Web items and the layout of the data.
- The BEx Web Analyzer provides a wide range of functions for ad hoc data analysis. These functions are made available by the following elements:
 - Pushbuttons
 - Links
 - Navigation pane
 - Context menu
- Using the pushbuttons available in the BEx Web Analyzer, you can quickly navigate to important functions that perform convenient ad hoc analysis of your business data.
- You can analyze your data ad hoc. The navigation pane, the interaction options in the analysis grid, and the context menu of the Web application are available for this purpose.
- Using the pushbutton, you can export the query result to Microsoft Excel including filters, exceptions and conditions.
- User can open the broadcasting wizard and use information broadcasting functions which help users to broadcast adhoc analysis.
- Users can make settings for a print version of their ad hoc analysis and can customize the way they want to print the PDF generated file
- Users can have data provider from SAP as well as non SAP system.
- In the Web Analyzer depending on the settings, data is displayed either in a table, a graphic, or in both a table and a graphic.
- As with all Web templates, you can also override the Web template properties for the standard Web template for ad hoc analysis and, therefore, for the Web Analyzer, using the appropriate parameterization.
- You can call the standard Web template for the ad hoc analysis from the following BEx tools:
 - In the menu bar of the Query Designer, choose *Display Query on the Web*
 - Choose Tools → View Definition.

SAP Business Objects Voyager

Features:

- It is a powerful solution for online analytical processing data.
- Voyager software enables business analysts to explore online analytical processing data using a tool designed specifically for them. It allows them to get answers to business questions, discover trends, and share their analysis with others. This software is offered as part of the complete SAP BusinessObjects XI solutions.
- SAP BusinessObjects Voyager is based on a completely modern Web design and takes advantage of the latest design techniques and technologies. The result is a functionally rich product in a zero-client environment allowing you to greatly reduce your deployment costs.
- With SAP BusinessObjects Voyager, there is no need to develop, deploy, and support a completely separate system for analysts using OLAP data. You can centrally manage security, data connectivity, and documents and drive down your costs.
- Once analysts have completed an analysis, they can share insights with business users across the organization and beyond with other SAP Business-Objects business intelligence (BI) solutions.
- SAP BusinessObjects Voyager also allows analysts to export results to Microsoft Excel or save them as Adobe PDF files for printing, archiving, or distribution.
- SAP BusinessObjects Voyager not only provides access to a wide range of OLAP databases, but it also allows analysts to combine information from different systems in a single work space. This greatly reduces the time it takes to pull the data together and complete the analysis, and it lessens your analysts' dependence on your support team for data consolidation.
- With SAP BusinessObjects Voyager, analysts can quickly access the specific data they need by refreshing only the relevant subset of data. This partial refresh means that they can get answers to specific questions swiftly and efficiently.
- SAP BusinessObjects Voyager allows your analysts to simultaneously show multiple views of the same OLAP cube or of different ones. For example, analysts can access a view of the cube for customer sales while also viewing the cube for inventory, thus providing a more comprehensive view of the business.
- SAP BusinessObjects Voyager supports OLAP databases such as SAP, Microsoft, and Oracle.
- With SAP Business-Objects Voyager, analysts can get answers to business questions quickly and efficiently while viewing large or small multidimensional data sets.
- SAP BusinessObjects Voyager visualizations and exception highlighting features allow analysts to quickly discover trends, patterns, and exceptions.
- Create faster and more-efficient ways to explore multidimensional data and answer business questions.
- Improved productivity and self-sufficiency because analysts can access all OLAP data more quickly and efficiently.

Crystal reports

Features:

- Crystal Reports is a business intelligence application used to design and generate reports from a wide range of data sources. Several other applications, such as Microsoft Visual Studio, bundle an OEM version of Crystal Reports as a general purpose reporting tool.
- Crystal Reports software enables you to easily design interactive reports and connect them to virtually any data source. Your users can benefit from on-report sorting and filtering – giving them the power to execute decisions instantly.
- With Crystal Reports Visual Advantage, you can gain even more functionality for compelling reports. This gives you the power to create highly formatted reports with what-if scenario models, interactive charts – and deliver them via the Web, e-mail, Microsoft Office, Adobe PDF, or embedded in enterprise applications.
- Crystal Report comes with flash integration that allow user to create stunning visualizations by adding dynamic charts, graphics and even video files to your reports. A wide variety of flexible data presentation options are available through Flash.
- It includes powerful crosstabs that create stunning visualizations by adding dynamic charts, graphics and even video files to your reports.
- It allows flexible pagination which Facilitate better online report viewing to your end users.
- It has Built-in barcode support which in turn saves design time and reduces your cost. It generates barcodes with only a few clicks of the mouse by using the new 'turn to barcode' function in the context menu.
- Crystal reports contain enhanced designer features which means Report designer will be more productive with features like global formula search, duplicate formula, duplicate running total, auto complete field names, and the 'find in field explorer' feature.
- It supports Multilingual reporting which means user can choose the working language you prefer by simply selecting the language packs you wish to use during your Crystal Reports installation.
- Users can save reports directly to crystalreports.com which expand your deployment options with on-demand reporting capabilities when you open and save reports directly to crystalreports.com. This new integration allows you to manage and share your reports securely without depending on IT support.
- It renders reports in almost any format and enjoys faster and easier integration with your industry-specific business processes without the need for custom coding. It has Improved XML exporting as compared to other reporting tools.
- With Crystal Reports, you can leverage a platform for the mass distribution of personalized content. User can create multiple reports based on different data sources, combined into one desired file format (such as PDF), loaded with personalized content, and then sent to a dynamic list of recipients – all with a single action.
- Refresh data in Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint documents.
- Explore reports interactively and minimize the number of reports generated.
- Capture essential information by saving customized report views.
- Lower your report deployment cost and reduce IT support
- Explore RPT files in Windows and on Macs.

Xcelsius

Features:

- Xcelsius software illuminates your business by providing consolidated views of key metrics, so you can answer your business questions at-a-glance.
- It allows users to interact with their data with what-if scenarios and other visual components and helps them to use their data to make informed decisions.
- Xcelsius Engage gives you the power to transform complex data into a comprehensive dashboard. User can create interactive dashboards from Microsoft Excel or a live data source, and export your dashboard to a familiar format – Microsoft Office, Flash (SWF) files, Adobe PDF, and Adobe AIR.
- Xcelsius Engage Server expands the benefits of Xcelsius Engage to meet the dashboarding needs of departments or small organizations. It allows for connecting multiple live data sources to make real-time decisions.
- Xcelsius Present is a powerful presentation tool that bridges the gap between static spreadsheets and the need for visual, interactive presentations. It brings Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to life with interactive charts and what-if scenarios. It requires no training or programming.
- It allows to Obtain better insight into the business performance.
- Using Xcelsius users can build professional-looking dashboards in just a few hours without writing a single line of code.
- It helps to transform complex organization's data into simple, actionable visual information.

SAP Business Objects Web Intelligence

Features:

- SAP BusinessObjects Web Intelligence enables you to offer a reporting environment that users can leverage to fulfill their reporting needs without always relying on a central department to build new or change existing reports.
- SAP BusinessObjects Web Intelligence provides an ad-hoc reporting tool to users thus establishing a self-service environment on top of SAP NetWeaver BW.
- SAP BusinessObjects Web Intelligence supports Powerful, Online and Offline Ad Hoc Queries and Reporting which:
 - Empower your end users via a robust semantic layer.
 - Make query building easy with an intuitive, Web-based interface.
 - Allows creating a query from scratch, format the retrieved information.
 - Analyze it to understand underlying trends and root causes.
 - Ensure controlled and secure information access.
 - Provide the power of mobility with offline capabilities.
- SAP BusinessObjects Web Intelligence supports Integrated and Reliable Analysis for All Users to complete following tasks:
 - Access and analyze information in a single interface.
 - Easily personalize, explore, and discuss information.
 - Interact with information via the interactive analysis framework.
- SAP BusinessObjects Web Intelligence is built on the most Complete, Trusted, and Agile Business Intelligence (BI) Platform which:
 - Enable BI standardization via shared administration and security.

- Deliver query, reporting, and analysis globally via a single deployment.
- Extend the reach of interactivity and analysis beyond the enterprise.
- SAP BusinessObjects Web Intelligence provides Easy and Secure Deployment:
 - Multiple languages and geographically dispersed users are supported from a single deployment. Organizations can extend these vital self-service capabilities beyond their employees to partners, suppliers, and customers with secure extranet deployments

SAP Visual Composer

Features:

- Visual Composer 7.0 is a powerful tool that enables business process experts to rapidly and easily model applications and prototypes without writing a single line of code.
- Visual Composer helps bridge the gap between the business process expert and IT, thus reducing the need for expensive consulting services, and lowering the TCO for the company.
- Visual Composer for SAP NetWeaver 7.0 focuses on the creation and adaptation of analytical and freestyle applications. It is a major step towards becoming the central modeling tool for creating and adapting composite applications as part of SAP's Enterprise SOA strategy.
- Visual Composer provides Data Service Layer tool that let you connect via the portal to back-end applications defined in the portal system landscape. This connection enables you to import into your Visual Composer model the relevant Remote Function Calls (RFCs), Business APIs (BAPIs) and other data sources on which you want to base your iViews.
- Users of Visual Composer can quickly implement new and adapt existing applications in order to support their companies' ever-changing business processes.
- Visual composer comes with the UI logic in which UI components are presented to the user at runtime, how the user may interact with the components, and what the underlying data queries are.
- The UI layout defines all the visual aspects of the iView.
- The main features and capabilities of Visual Composer 7.0 are:
 - Out-of-the box connectivity to different backend systems (SAP and non-SAP)
 - Advanced Modeling capabilities
 - One-click deployment mechanism
- The SAP NetWeaver Visual Composer results in a wide range of business benefits:
 - It encourages self-service and buy-in from users because it is highly interactive and user-friendly.
 - It improves employee productivity and customer satisfaction by providing a rich end-user experience.
 - It adds business value and improves decision making by instantly providing business data to users.
 - It improves overall efficiency through its streamlined development process.
 - It improves user satisfaction by shortening the learning curve for new users and providing a rich, interactive user experience.

Product Feature Comparison

FEATURES	BEX ANALYZER	BEX WEB APPLICATION DESIGNER	BEX WEB ANALYZER	BUSINESS VOYAGER	CRYSTAL REPORTS	XCELSIUS	BUSINESS OBJECTS WEB INTELLIGENCE	VISUAL COMPOSER
ADHOC Analysis		X*	X				X	
Partial Refresh								
Simultaneous Multiple View of Data				X				
Export to EXCEL,CSV	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Planning functions	X	X				X		
Multiple datasources support			X	X	X	X	X	X
Dashboard creation	X	X			X	X		
Lower TCO				X	X			X
User self service capability							X	X
Broadcasting and publishing		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mobility with offline capability							X	
Multiple language support					X		X	
Visual, interactive presentation					X	X		
Adobe flash integration					X	X		
Microsoft share point integration						X		
Microsoft visual studio compatibility					X			
Dynamic charts, Graphics and video file Support					X			
Xml exporting					X	X		

*- X indicates product supports the specific feature.

Conclusion

Improved analysis for more effective Business needs.

Applying the different reporting tools discussed in this white paper will ensure managers to make best decisions possible, based upon the data available to them at the time. If their ability to analyze this data and transform into useful information is improved, the overall quality of their decisions will improve as well.

The key is to choose right reporting tool that integrate with their environment supporting their long term growth.

Related Content

For more information related to reporting tool features visit below mentioned links:

<http://www.sap.com/solutions/sapbusinessobjects/>

<http://www.sap.com/solutions/sapbusinessobjects/large/intelligenceplatform/bi/>

<http://www.sap.com/solutions/sapbusinessobjects/sme/reporting/crystalreports/index.epx>

<http://www.sap.com/solutions/sapbusinessobjects/>

For more information, visit the [Business Intelligence homepage](#).

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