

# BusinessObjects Explorer Implementation Checklist for SAP BI



## Applies to:

Supporting the Business Objects Explorer + BW Accelerator

## Summary

This article explains the support components of the SAP BW Accelerator as the underlying layer with BO Explorer.

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## Author Bio

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## BO EXPLORER

### BO Explorer background

BW Accelerator was formerly called Polestar and is now named BO Explorer.

BO Explorer (BOEx) is an appliance provided jointly by SAP/BOBJ that can be either a standalone appliance or an add-on to an existing BW Accelerator.

The role of the BO Explorer is to provide 'blistering speed' analytics by leveraging columnar based structures for text-based analytics (contextual informatics).

Currently the BO Explorer can source data from BW and other source systems via Business Objects.

### BOEx Technical Profile

At an executive level the BOEx consists of

- BOEx is a web based textual analytics tool that provides "blink analysis" from text-based questions. An executive can simply type "2008 Q4 total sales for shoes?", and the BOEx will provide instant analytics.
- It is the world's greatest ad hoc Executive Informatics mining tool that is miles ahead of the traditional data mining tools. Data mining provides a lot of data. Informatics mining delivers executive level trends and graphical details.
- BOEx Blades: For existing BWA customers, BO Explorer blade can be applied to existing BW Accelerators for exceptional speed analytics. For new customers, the BOEx appliance can be sourced desperately.
- BOEx can also be run without an Accelerator. Without the BWA the BOEx will provide answers but at considerably slow speeds.
- Test run the BOEx by uploading the largest Excel file you can find <http://goexplore.ondemand.com> and then play to your satisfaction.

### Support options

- **Layer 1** support must come only from SAP (BOEx Software in each blade).
- **Layer 2** support comes from your BO Explorer HW vendor (everything other than the BOEx SW).
- **Layer 3.1** support needed to be defined in a RACI with the Data Center support administration.
- **Layer 3.2** support comes from the BI Basis and BO Explorer BI Support team.

## BOEx Implementation Checklist

### How will BOEx enhance SLA's?

Here are some of the things BW teams may not need to do any more

- Build executive Queries for critical requirements.
- Build DSO's for urgent executive requests.
- Build executive level InfoCubes.
- Create urgent executive dashboards and scorecards.

## Why do customers buy BO Explorer?

Customers do not buy the BO Explorer appliance. What they are buying is query performance for executive Informatics Mining. BO Explorer allows free-form questions with extremely rapid response times.

## Align User Expectations

Like everything else, the BO Explorer is not a silver bullet that will resolve every query with required answers. It needs to be planned and deployed for specific purposes and executive goals. The BOEx appliance can provide exceptional query performance if applied in the right manner and if the user expectations are set correctly.

Aligning user expectations is the most critical aspect of the BO Explorer deployment.

The value offer of BOEx is "Enable exceptional performance for Ad-Hoc Executive Informatics Mining".

The reason for this is

- BOEx is designed for executive level informatics browsing to view trends and process distribution so as to enable them to ask further questions. BOEx is not designed to provide complex cross function reporting for operational management.
- BOEx creates queries on the fly with data and graphs. It does not need data base access or OLAP time.
- If self-service executive informatics is the goal, then BOEx is the answer. If replacing the DW, BI or BW is the goal, BOEx is not the solution.
- If there are 200 million records and it is necessary to summarize that into a one single question, BOEx can show the answer without the need for any query in the background.

## Enhance your BW before planning for BOEx

Some companies have fundamentally defective BW standards.

**Rule 1:** If BW standards are defective then BOEx will provide lesser value.

**Rule 2:** If system has duplicate KPI's then BOEx will provide as many answers as there are duplicates.

## What all can users do in BOEx?

At blistering speeds users can

- change the report mix from one characteristic to another (i.e. from customer to material)
- flip form data to chart
- flip from one chart type to another
- add a filter
- save an exploratory view
- drill down into values you want to further analyze
- select different characteristics, or measures, in the exploratory view
- add a calculation to an existing measure
- apply sorts and ranks to your exploratory views
- share an exploratory view with others
- upload data from large excel sheets and instantly analyze the data
- personalize row filtering selections.

At any speed users cannot

- get a single answer if your source system has multiple KPI's
- create cross-application operational reports
- create cross source system executive reports unless the master data is harmonized
- merge data from many sources to get one consolidated answer
- get historical trends and comparisons
- get time stamped analytics, i.e. stock position as of x date.

## What is the best and worst thing about BO Explorer?

- Its greatest strength is its simplicity.
- Its greatest weakness is its simplicity.

Because of this reason, it is imperative to understand what BOEx can and cannot do in order to align user expectations and avoid post production disappointments.

## Using the BO Explorer Executive Informatics cockpit

Use the BOEx Executive Informatics cockpit as an executive tool for

- mapping out of the ordinary, unknown informatics nuggets, (for example, seeing graphical deviation or abnormality trends in analytical groups)
- executive Informatics mining, finding things you were not even looking for
- executive analytics assistant, defining tasks for your business analysts to work on by finding attributes that exist outside the normal distribution
- executive friendly analytical mining tool, running self-service queries for questions that have never been developed and do not exist in a query form in any system
- asking questions that have never been asked before
- analytics at the speed of thought.

## Prepare BW DSO's and InfoCubes for BO Explorer

One of the most critical requirements for BO Explorer is standards. Without standards there could be 100 answers to a single question or you may be looking at the wrong solution without knowing it. The question always remains, as to who is responsible if your CxO picks the wrong KPI and takes a decision?

The key standard being mentioned here is Naming Standards. The reason for this is that in a traditional BW environment developers individually attach a specific KPI to a specific query. The developers always know what to attach to which query.

However, it is extremely common to find KPI's like 'Total Amount' with a Technical ID of ZTAMT in the system, and then find that there are a 100 other 'total amount' KPI's in the system too, one for sales, one for returns, another for procurement, etc. This lack of standards can cause issues in BOEx responses.

There is an inherent need to clear all ambiguity from text based analytics by maintaining razor sharp standards -- from definitions and technical ID's to short text descriptions. Small changes in standards will translate to a big leap for BOEx analytics. There are automated tools available that will model the InfoCubes for BW Accelerator for BO Explorer.

## Review the standards

Create a set of global SAP BW BI standards that can identify every single BW object, individually for each region, each business, each owner, and so forth. Do not use Z for custom objects anymore. Replace these with modern global BW standard conventions.

**BW Standards:** manual standards. BW standards come in two forms:

- **Manual 1:** made by ex ABAP resources from SAP ABAP background – they prefer to use Z which was mandatory in SAP R/3 but not in BW. Their environments are loaded with only with Z objects
- **Manual 2:** made by modern BI architects where global naming standards can uniquely identify each object by simply its tech ID and Short text.

## Check BW for Redundancy

Do a source field analysis and check where there is data duplication in the BW environment. Eliminate duplicate and redundant objects from the BW and BWA environments. There are automated tools available that allow “Source Field to InfoObject Discovery” for an analysis and cleanup planning of the BW environment. These tools work at field and data source level and are essential for elimination of duplicate KPI’s and redundant objects, like test KPI’s.

## If BOEx is so great how can it go wrong?

- By not setting user expectations correctly. Just like the BW Accelerator, BOEx is not a silver bullet.
- By not planning for BOEx.
- Getting too many answers and not knowing which one may be correct.
- Not being able to ask complex questions, or build complex queries.
- Assuming BOEx will answer all the BW queries.
- Assuming executives can sit in a room, ask any question and get an answer in less than one second.

The most important component of a BOEx project is to set user expectations straight from the start.

### Why remodel an InfoCube for BOEx?

One school of thought recommends that we do not need to remodel the InfoCube for BOEx as BOEx will take care of all the data.

On the other side is the school insists on re-modeling for the following reasons

- BW InfoCubes need to be cleansed for BO Explorer. Without this, the BOEx may not provide entirely right answers. Without entirely right answers, executives may make faulty decisions. Without suitable decisions, the company may not head in the right direction.
- It is a well known fact that “companies do not collapse due to one big bad decision, but due to the accumulation of a lot of ‘not entirely right’ decisions”.
- BWA Cubes are modeled for space minimization and not for performance as performance will be provided by the BWA + BOEx. Space is extremely expensive in the BWA. A space reduction of 30% will mean 30% less blades which will mean initial one-time saving and an annual saving on support costs.
- BOEx cubes have to be modeled for elimination of redundancies and duplicates. BOEx is highly dependent on standards. These must be incorporated for optimal performance.
- Remodeling can be undertaken with intent to enhance only the space and data load capabilities, or for elimination of redundancies. Data load performance is also an additional benefit for considering re-modeling.

## Understand the BOEx Implementation

A BO Explorer needs to be planned and deployed.

- **Option 1:** Quick and easy Technical Implementation – fast to deploy costly to maintain, could result in disappointments due to unclear business expectations.
- **Option 2:** Planned and optimized BOEx implementation with BOEx focused remodeling, Slimming of InfoCubes, documented RACI, training, etc. accomplished before the BOEx blade is inserted into the BWA appliance.

## Supporting a BOEx Implementation

Up to one week before the BOEx implementation, 90% of the work needs to be done by the Basis team, preferably by the same resource that supports the BW and BWA basis.

One week before and thereafter, 95% of the support needs to be provided by the BW support team.

So the BW team needs to be more involved in the BOEx implementation than Basis.

### What support does the BW team need for BOEx?

#### BW Checks

1. Communicate standards to all BOEx users.
2. Clean cubes for BOEx.
3. Remodel cubes for BWA and BOEx
4. Identify and clean redundant data for BOEx.

#### BO Explorer Checks

The **BW team** needs to support data roll-up to BOEx checks.

The **Basis team** needs to support

- BOEx space utilization checks
- BOEx space forecasting.

#### BW Accelerator Checks (if applicable)

The BW team role should be the following:

1. Index and re-index cubes.
2. Check process chain – daily.
3. Compare indexed cubes – daily.
4. Reconcile data between BW and BOEx.

They should also have the ability to do the following (tool-based):

- forecast BOEX data growth
- compare BOEX and BW Indexed cubes
- view indexed data in BOEx.

The BW Basis team role should be to

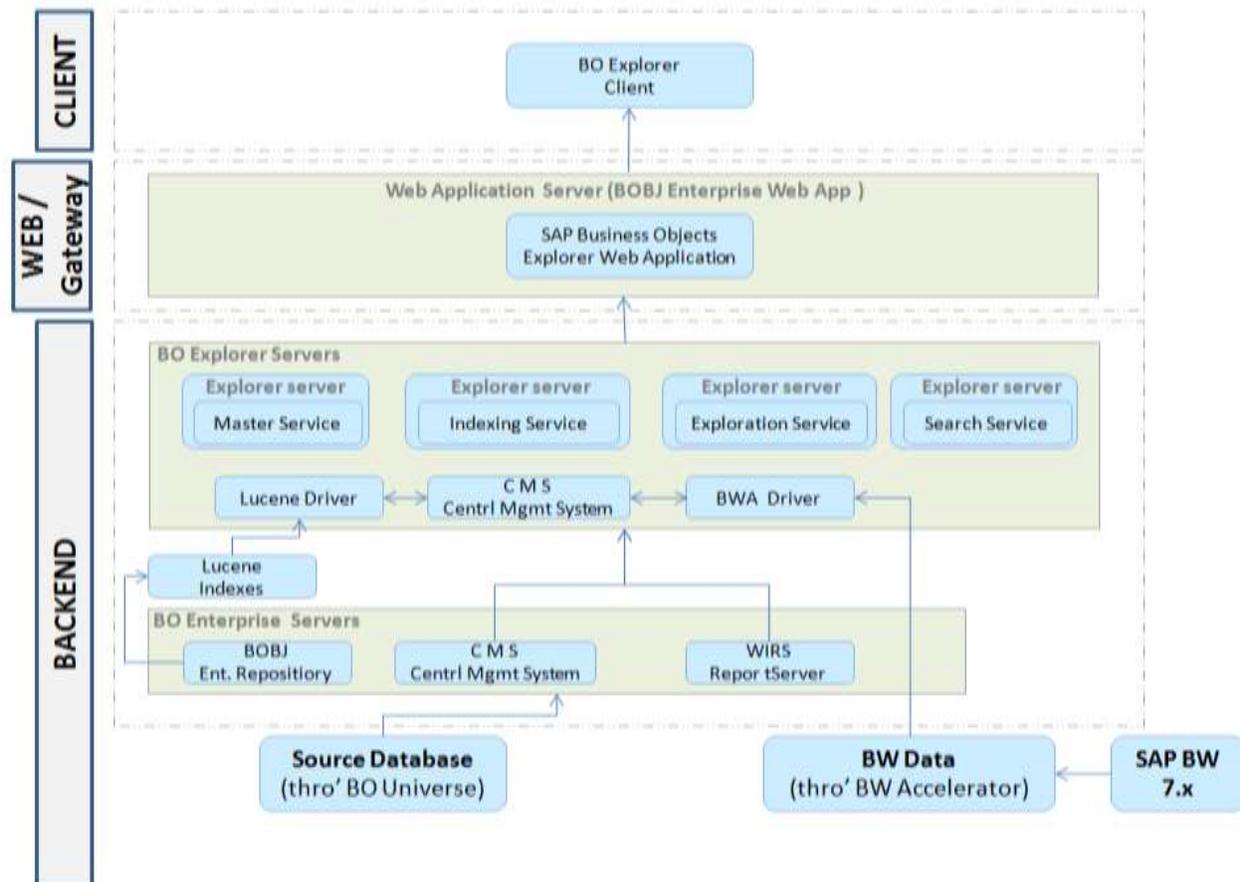
- Monitor space usage and alerts.
- Forecast when the next blades will be required (tool based).
- Review patch and upgrade.

## A final basic rule

**Plan the work and only then work the plan.**

This will eliminate surprises 2 to 4 weeks after go-live.

## High level – BO Explorer Architecture & Data Flow



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