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The Road to BI Success in SAP Environments: Are You On It?

When SAP acquired Business Objects two years ago, customers initially had questions about how to incorporate SAP BusinessObjects business intelligence (BI) and information management (IM) solutions into their SAP environments. That space is now well understood.¹ I am, however, still hearing lots of questions about the product roadmap for BI and IM, and many customers aren't fully aware of how much has happened since the acquisition.

In this article, I'll share a summary of the key IM and BI best practices, integrations, and optimizations that SAP has delivered in various product releases and service packs over the last 20+ months – and preview what's to come.

The SAP BusinessObjects IM Portfolio: What's New and Most Relevant for SAP Customers?

Some of the most notable new features of the SAP BusinessObjects IM portfolio (see **Figure 1** on the next page) include functionality that makes it easier to get data into SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse (SAP NetWeaver BW), access the data in more flexible ways, and keep tabs on the downstream consequences of any source changes:

- Now that **SAP BusinessObjects Metadata Management** supports SAP NetWeaver BW, data lineage and impact analysis for SAP NetWeaver BW are available to customers for the first time. *Data lineage* answers important questions like: Where has the data come from? What has it been through? And *impact analysis* should be part of any IT survival kit; it lets IT professionals understand the impact of data source changes on end-user reports and other downstream data consumption. "Reputation assurance" might be an even better name for impact analysis – it avoids the classic case of a user asking: "Why doesn't my report work anymore? What have you changed?"
- **SAP BusinessObjects Data Federator**, which makes SAP NetWeaver BW data available with high performance,

now supports Data Store Objects (for low-level, detailed information), MultiProviders (as a union between InfoProviders), and InfoCubes (for aggregated information). This approach scales very well and is fully compatible with InfoCubes accelerated by SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse Accelerator (SAP NetWeaver BW Accelerator). Unlike other federation products that support SAP NetWeaver BW via public BAPI access, SAP BusinessObjects Data Federator accesses the data in SAP NetWeaver BW directly and at the lowest level (right above the InfoProviders) while leveraging metadata in SAP NetWeaver BW. Customers using this connectivity for large operational reports have experienced excellent performance results.

What's New with SAP BusinessObjects BI Tools?

There are also new optimizations and features on the SAP BusinessObjects BI tools side (refer again to Figure 1), including:

- **Usability improvements** (such as fold/unfold capabilities for complex reports) to better consume SAP NetWeaver BW hierarchies in SAP BusinessObjects Web Intelligence

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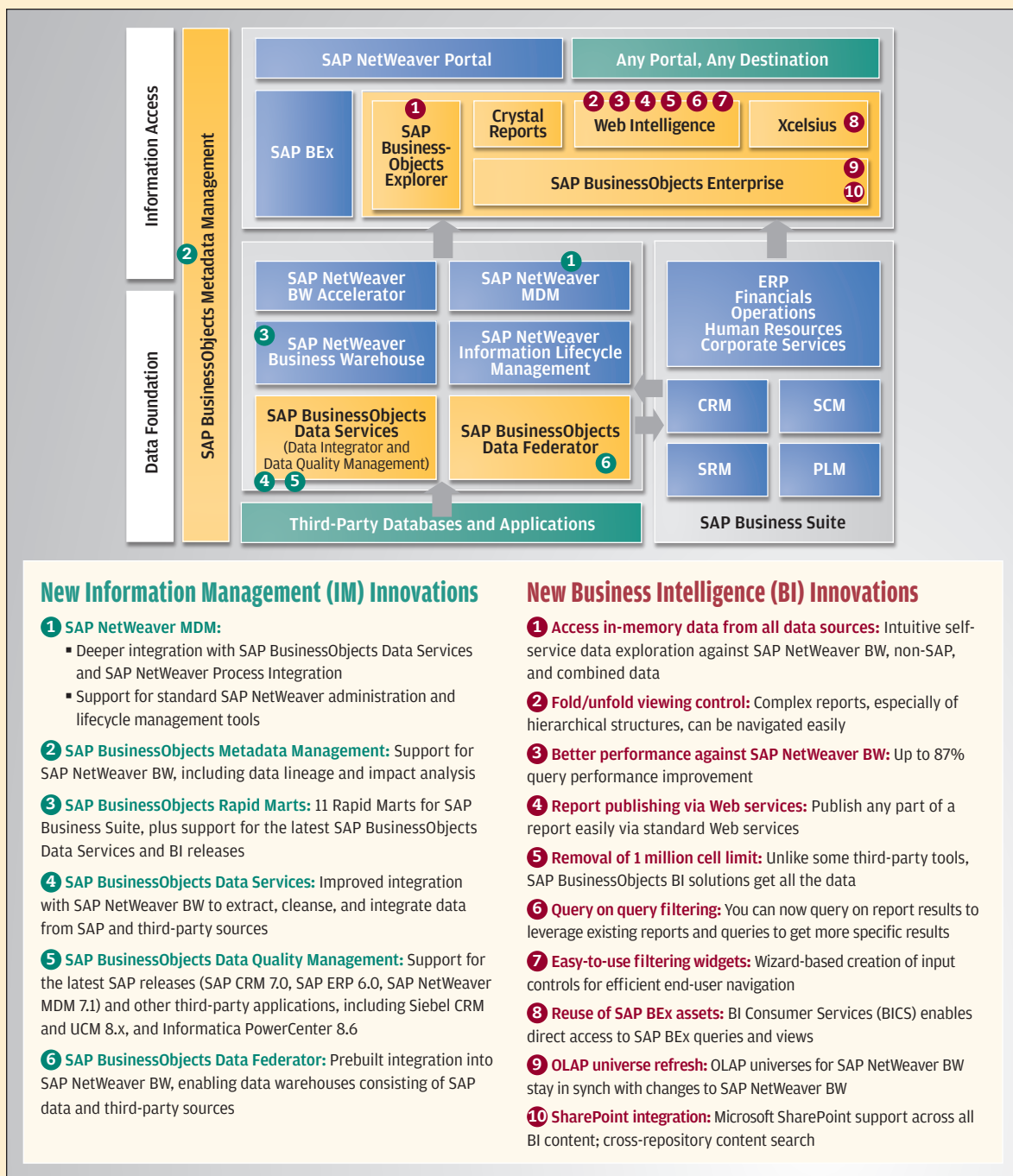
¹ Please see my article "Which Business Intelligence Tools Should You Use?" in the January-March 2009 issue of *SAPinsider* (sapinsider.wispubs.com).

- A dramatic **performance boost** (nearly 90%) by taking out layers and optimizing MDX queries
- **Better lifecycle management for OLAP universes** on SAP NetWeaver BW; changes in SAP NetWeaver BW are now automatically promoted and reflected in OLAP universes
- Implemented in Xcelsius, new **BI Consumer Services (BICS) connectivity** provides direct access to SAP Business

Explorer (SAP BEx) queries and views in SAP NetWeaver BW; with this new connectivity, customers can not only get faster and more direct access to SAP NetWeaver BW, but also leverage their existing SAP BEx views and queries to get best-of-breed, interactive dashboards for SAP NetWeaver BW data while minimizing additional license and implementation costs

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FIGURE 1 ▶ Key new information management (IM) and business intelligence (BI) innovations and integrations available today in SAP landscapes





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Openness at SAP: The Key to a Successful BI and Information Management Strategy

Your marketing department likely relies on a certain application to run its part of the business, just as your finance department relies on another. And your HR department probably has a specific information management system it prefers to use. These systems and applications may or may not be from SAP – and they probably sit in different IT landscapes on a multitude of databases and application servers.

Businesses are challenged by these silos of information. Achieving a 360-degree view of data across numerous information systems is a goal every organization strives for yet seldom attains. It is an age-old problem that is fully recognized at SAP – and it's what led SAP to focus on an open and agnostic information access strategy for its solutions.

Information for Everyone: A Democratized, Open Approach

The concept of openness is a key priority for SAP. It has played a leading role in the development of our information management (IM) and data warehousing solutions, as well as our newly evolved business intelligence (BI) layer.

Although long embraced at SAP, openness is an approach that has evolved slowly over time. In the early days, SAP solutions were often perceived as proprietary and challenging for organizations to incorporate with non-SAP applications. However, as data volumes grew and business

applications proliferated, SAP jumped into action and not only strengthened many core technologies, but also started offering new BI solutions from the SAP BusinessObjects portfolio to give customers access to a broad range of both SAP and non-SAP environments.

Now, by implementing a standard open strategy for information access and management (see Key Concept box), SAP sets the stage for organizations to meet – and overcome – today's challenges of rationalizing and consolidating information and business processes.

The 3 Pillars of SAP's Openness Strategy

Let's explore the key technical areas in which SAP strives to achieve openness for customers.

1. Unlock Disparate Data with Open Data Integration

Data integration helps bring together cleansed data (see sidebar) from a company's various and varied applications and databases. SAP provides the technology, tools, and packaged applications required to rapidly and successfully integrate data from a range of non-SAP enterprise applications with its own and other systems. Real-time and batch data integration is designed to simplify and speed data movement and sharing across applications. This allows users to easily explore, extract, transform, and deliver data, regardless of where or how the data is stored.

With a commitment to heterogeneous and agnostic solutions, SAP is uniquely positioned to provide its customers with complete information access to meet any BI and IM needs.

Key Concept: Open Access



SAP has evolved its BI and IM strategies for greater focus on enabling **open access** – unlocking and accessing all corporate information, structured and unstructured, regardless of format, shape, size, or location. Broader data access ultimately means that users within an organization can make decisions more confidently because SAP delivers a consistent user experience, no matter what the data sources are.

Data Quality: A Prerequisite to Openness

Providing trusted, accurate information is a critical step in developing a solid foundation for open information access. Using SAP's information management solutions, organizations can centralize the discovery, correction, and prevention of data quality issues through a native interface. This interface embeds data quality capabilities within many different applications, whether SAP-based or not.

2. Enable Better Decision Making with Open Data Access

Every organization likely has multiple underlying databases and data stores from several vendors – it's a reality that SAP understands well. While data integration efforts focus on extracting, transforming, and loading data into a database or data warehouse, SAP's business intelligence solutions provide direct connectivity to both SAP and non-SAP applications while maintaining support for single sign-on, authentication, and security.

Native driver support for non-SAP databases and data warehouses is essential for achieving true openness. Whether the information you need resides in a relational or OLAP database, a mainframe system, or a packaged application, SAP's business intelligence solutions can easily access and exploit this information through native or ODBC connectivity.

The overriding benefit of having access to both SAP and non-SAP data is organizations' ability to now turn to SAP BusinessObjects BI solutions for comprehensive BI functionality that can empower users to make effective, informed decisions based on solid data and analysis.

3. Provide a Consolidated View of All Data with Open Data Warehousing

A data warehouse stores standardized, consistent, clean, and integrated data sourced from various operational systems in use within the organization. Combined with a BI solution, data warehouses deliver an easy way for companies to conduct in-depth analyses of their data to leverage important trends.

SAP achieves openness in three ways related to data warehousing. First, through its own data warehousing solution, SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse (SAP NetWeaver BW), SAP provides reliable and open data acquisition by

tightly integrating data across all SAP applications and business processes and enriching accessibility of heterogeneous data sources and data quality.

The second data warehousing area showcasing SAP's spirit of openness comes by way of new strategic partnerships with Teradata and HP. SAP NetWeaver BW is now optimized to run on Teradata and HP Neoview databases, expanding the footprint of databases already supported: Oracle, Microsoft SQL Server, and IBM DB2.

SAP BusinessObjects IM and BI solutions complete the picture for openness with end-to-end data warehousing and analysis. SAP's close partnerships with key industry vendors ensure that all customers, regardless of which data warehouse they're using, can take advantage of SAP's powerful enterprise reporting, query and analysis, and performance management solutions.

Recognize the Benefits of an Open Information Strategy

Faced with a plethora of different data sources, platforms, and legacy systems, business users want to get the information they need by leveraging their current technology investments.

SAP meets the needs of a truly heterogeneous system and business environment by:

- Offering organizations the ability to integrate and consolidate data from any application and data source
- Providing broad and flexible support for standard industry applications and solutions

The result: companies get instant insight across all corporate data for a 360-degree view into the entire business.

This is the essence of SAP's openness strategy. With a commitment to heterogeneous and agnostic solutions, SAP is uniquely positioned to provide its customers with complete information access to meet any BI and IM needs. And as the number of enterprise data sources and volumes continues to grow rapidly, organizations that can manage and harness their data hold a distinct competitive advantage over other companies.

To learn more about SAP's open approach to business intelligence and enterprise information access, visit www.sap.com/usa/solutions/sapbusinessobjects/index.epx. ■

As the number of enterprise data sources and volumes continues to grow rapidly, organizations that can manage and harness their data hold a distinct competitive advantage.

Open Information Access Through Enterprise Portals

SAP provides its customers with the ability to organize and display business intelligence (BI) information within your existing enterprise portals, SAP or otherwise, allowing you to view and edit BI content, schedule reports, and integrate BI content into existing workflows.



Prof. Detlev Steinbinder
Member of Management
PBS Software GmbH

Optimize Your SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse Data

PBS Offers Powerful Nearline Storage Solutions

Companies that are looking to keep their data in an accessible place – without bogging down their SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse (SAP NetWeaver BW) systems – need to embrace the principles of information lifecycle management (ILM). They must employ proven ILM strategies to control unlimited database growth and stop their database costs from exploding.

To achieve this goal, many companies manage their data by moving it to an archive or an external nearline storage system and deleting it from the SAP NetWeaver BW system. To move data to a nearline storage system, companies can use a file-based archiving process – which is likely familiar to those that work with SAP ERP. Or, as of SAP NetWeaver BW 7.0, they can move their data to a nearline storage system via SAP's nearline storage interface.

These nearline storage solutions have grown in popularity because they allow users to run queries more easily on archived or nearlined data. In addition, nearline solutions offer high data compression and fast query access combined with low hardware requirements.

By consistently moving data to a nearline solution, companies can significantly reduce the load on an SAP NetWeaver BW database. To find a nearline solution that fits your company's needs, you should turn to an established third-party vendor like PBS.

PBS's Innovative Nearline Solutions Help You Optimize Your System Performance

PBS Software is a dedicated solution provider with 18 years of experience working with the SAP archiving environment. Our company has over 1,000 customers all over the world and currently offers products – all of which are certified for SAP NetWeaver BW 3.x and 7.x – to support an organization's ILM initiatives.

Our product line includes two solutions for the new SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse nearline interface. As we mentioned, these solutions are available for SAP NetWeaver BW releases 7.0 and up. However, our solutions

can also be downgraded to support SAP NetWeaver BW 3.x. These solutions are:

- **PBS CBW NLS ADK.** This solution is completely file based and is built on SAP's Archive Development Kit (ADK) technology. PBS CBW NLS ADK is a pure software solution written in ABAP that requires no additional database, making it easy to implement. To drill down to archived InfoCubes or Data Store Object (DSO) tables, the solution operates with special archive indexes and archive aggregates that are generated in compressed files outside of the SAP NetWeaver BW database. This solution can be seamlessly integrated into existing archive infrastructures.
- **PBS CBW NLS IQ.** This solution uses column-based database technology from Sybase – the Sybase IQ Analytics Server. In contrast to the file-based approach, leveraging column-based technology requires no archive files, archive indexes, or archive aggregates. This is what makes this technology so unique. With column-based technology, nothing else is needed to compress data. This means that PBS CBW NLS IQ enables extremely quick ad hoc query response times, even when there are high levels of nearline data compression. Please note that one prerequisite to using PBS CBW NLS IQ is this: A company's SAP NetWeaver BW data must be properly archived using SAP's purely nearline-based data archiving process, which works without file archives. The archive data is then generated directly in Sybase IQ. Note that you'll also need additional server hardware to run Sybase IQ.

No matter which of PBS's nearline storage solutions you choose, your company will gain quick query access and be able to optimize system performance because both solutions store data in highly compressed form on low-cost hardware (see sidebar on the next page). It is important to note, however, that all solutions from PBS are based on the premise that the SAP data archiving process has already taken place.

Nearline solutions offer high data compression and fast query access combined with low hardware requirements.

Optimize Your Query Run Times

It's important to keep in mind that archiving only helps reduce costs if large DSO tables or InfoCubes are also archived. But many business users worry that archiving these items will increase their query run times. They want to know: How fast can queries run against archived data?

Query run times really depend on the archiving method used. If InfoCubes are archived on the Sybase IQ Analytics Server, fast query performance can be achieved without modeling any aggregates or indexes. The column-based technology provides shorter query response times than queries against normal databases.

For queries against very large InfoCubes, with hundreds of millions of records, PBS recommends the CBW NLS IQ solution. Here, the fast-loading capability and column technology truly offer significant advantages especially as more and more users access their nearline data in parallel mode.

Customers who use the CBW NLS ADK solution can tune their query performance by setting up the PBS archive aggregates or indexes in the right way. Here, greater knowledge of the SAP NetWeaver BW data model is quite useful. A well-defined archive aggregate can also lead to query run times in the range of several seconds.

Additional Features and Benefits of PBS's Nearline Solutions

Both PBS CBW NLS ADK and PBS CBW NLS IQ have additional compelling features. For example:

- When used in conjunction with SAP's data archiving processes, users can archive InfoCubes or DSO data into PBS's solutions.
- In many SAP NetWeaver BW installations, significant disk space is occupied by data from the persistent staging area (PSA). For that reason, PBS's solutions provide a PSA component that makes it possible to archive PSA tables in a file archive or directly in the Sybase IQ nearline server. This in turn allows companies to retain these tables because PBS's solutions compress them to less than 10% of their original size at a 90% compression rate. After the archiving process, the PSAs can be deleted from the SAP NetWeaver BW database.
- Archived PSA data can be included in new SAP NetWeaver BW data transfer processes to set up new DSO or InfoCube data. The PSA functionality allows users to reduce the size of the SAP NetWeaver BW database very quickly and efficiently. In customer systems, this functionality has been used to reduce the size of the BW database by 40% in only a couple of days.
- Both solutions have a built-in PBS Data Export Interface. This interface allows users to extract tax-relevant data from SAP NetWeaver BW tables for auditing purposes.

The data extracts are then saved as sequential files in ASCII format and can be evaluated directly with tax audit tools. Supported data sources for these extracts include InfoCubes, DSOs, master data, text files, or any transparent tables.

- PBS also supports displaying archived data through MultiProvider queries. If no MultiProviders are available, they can be generated in the PBS CBW Cockpit. This technology is also quite helpful for archiving data before upgrading to SAP NetWeaver BW 7.0. In these cases, the archive data that is generated in SAP NetWeaver BW 3.x will then become available for query retrieval in SAP NetWeaver BW 7.0.

Learn More

In summary, a major advantage that PBS's solutions offer is their ability to combine both archiving and nearline functionality. This combination helps customers achieve an ILM implementation that fits their specific requirements. In addition, PBS solutions feature a wide variety of functions that extend well beyond the requirements of the SAP standard nearline interface – including MultiProvider support for all SAP NetWeaver BW releases, PSA archiving, and audit extracts.

If you're interested in learning more about the benefits of nearline storage and about PBS's array of nearline solutions, I strongly encourage you to visit www.PBS-Software.com/PBS4SAPBW.html. ■

A major advantage of PBS solutions is their ability to combine both archiving and nearline functionality, helping customers achieve an ILM implementation that fits their specific needs.



Thomas Bechtel
SAP Portfolio Manager
BW Accelerator
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Uncover the Hidden Treasures of Your Business Warehouse

With an IT Infrastructure Solution from Fujitsu

Data stored in a business warehouse is a lot like buried treasure: It can only be retrieved by the owner of a treasure map – the skilled and patient information worker who can create complex queries and tactfully dig through a tangled mass of information.

But what if that information worker could retrieve data much faster and with more straightforward techniques? What if other users unfamiliar with the business warehouse could also quickly and intuitively locate the information they need? This could increase the benefit of the data warehouse enormously.

With SAP BusinessObjects Explorer, SAP hands a treasure map to anyone within an organization that leverages SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse (SAP NetWeaver BW).¹ Users can directly and intuitively access data by using keyword search functionality within SAP BusinessObjects Explorer. The secret is the combination of the high performance of SAP NetWeaver BW Accelerator and the user-friendly SAP BusinessObjects functionality.

Fujitsu Enhances the Use of SAP NetWeaver BW Accelerator and SAP BusinessObjects Explorer

However, widely opening the data warehouse to all relevant users requires more than just an excellent solution. It also requires a strong foundation – including an optimized platform, easy implementation, excellent integration, and reliable support. Here's where Fujitsu comes in: We offer expertise gained by working on more than 7,000 SAP integration and implementation projects worldwide.

Fujitsu's solutions and service offerings give organizations end-to-end project coverage for both SAP NetWeaver BW Accelerator and SAP BusinessObjects Explorer. Fujitsu provides:

- **BW Accelerator Infrastructure**, a preinstalled and validated infrastructure environment consisting of powerful

PRIMERGY blade servers, reliable storage technology, Linux OS, and the SAP software stack

- **Implementation services** specific to SAP NetWeaver BW Accelerator and SAP BusinessObjects Explorer to guide the customer through successful implementation

- **Maintenance services** for BW Accelerator Infrastructure

Across all of these services, the mature Fujitsu implementation methodology allows users to jumpstart their treasure hunt by enabling them to quickly use SAP BusinessObjects Explorer. And because the customer-specific SAP BusinessObjects Explorer solution comes preinstalled, the implementation phase is significantly shorter. This is not only an enormous advantage for the IT department, but it also allows users in different operating departments to rapidly benefit from the solution. In addition, Fujitsu's integration services, which are based on best-practice templates, minimize customers' integration efforts. These services include performance checks and the evaluation and design of complete architectures and processes.

Maintenance and support services are also available from Fujitsu. Our SolutionContract offering ensures optimal safeguarding for your data search and retrieval. SolutionContract provides a single point of contact for all infrastructure-specific topics related to SAP NetWeaver BW Accelerator or SAP BusinessObjects Explorer. Fujitsu offers reactive, as well as proactive, services based on a remote service connection, thus further reducing operating efforts (note that SAP provides the SAP software maintenance).

Set Yourself Up for a Successful Expedition

Planning your SAP BusinessObjects Explorer roadmap is a bit like planning a promising treasure hunt. To ensure that your data search will hit the jackpot, you need the proper equipment and safeguarding on hand – the offerings from SAP, as well as the strong foundation and services from Fujitsu. To learn more, please visit <http://ts.fujitsu.com/bwa>. ■

Planning your SAP BusinessObjects Explorer roadmap is a bit like planning a promising treasure hunt.

¹ For an overview of SAP BusinessObjects Explorer, see the SAP special report on page 31 of this issue of *SAPinsider* (sapinsider.wispubs.com).



Philippe De Smedt
Executive Vice President
Idhasoft, Inc.

Make the Most of Your SAP Data Now

Deploy Prebuilt, Production-Ready Reports with Idhasoft

If your company runs SAP ERP, you're already achieving operational efficiency and excellence. But, how do you harness all the valuable data you're capturing in SAP ERP to drive your business forward?

You would be hard pressed to find an organization that doesn't want to use corporate data to drive more effective business decisions. When you are making critical decisions – for example, when you are defining a new market opportunity to increase revenue, altering product allocations to your distribution outlets to increase profitability, or spotting trends within customer behavior patterns to

define and drive new targeted sales and marketing programs – you need timely, accurate, focused, and actionable information.

Start with SAP BusinessObjects BI Solutions

Through its acquisition of Business Objects in 2008, SAP offers an enterprise-wide business intelligence (BI) platform that SAP customers can use to raise the level of strategic analysis and reporting within their organizations. The platform helps ensure that the right data reaches the right people – in the breadth, depth, and format they require – at precisely the time they need it to make critical business decisions and proactively execute business strategies.

The question is: How can SAP customers quickly get started using SAP BusinessObjects BI solutions against their existing SAP ERP application data?

Extend SAP's Functionality with Idhasoft's Packaged Analytics Solution

Combining its SAP ERP knowledge with its SAP BusinessObjects solution expertise, Idhasoft has developed an out-of-the-box solution called **Packaged Analytics** (see sidebar). This solution leverages the full suite of SAP BusinessObjects components to quickly provide real-time, executive-level views of your sales, finance, and operational key performance indicators (KPIs). Should a concern be flagged, Idhasoft's integrated approach allows the user to explore the information more deeply in search of root causes and logical next business actions.

The solution delivers prebuilt dashboards based on industry-specific KPIs, drill-down analysis reports, and classical production reports that are quickly deployable on top of your existing SAP ERP implementation (see **Figure 1**). Moreover, the solution is readily extensible by customers using traditional SAP BusinessObjects tools.

To learn more about Idhasoft Packaged Analytics, as well as numerous other products and services in our SAP portfolio, call +1 877 454-4727 or visit www.idhasoft.com. ■

Packaged Analytics: Solution at a Glance

Idhasoft's Packaged Analytics solution provides prebuilt content for SAP ERP customers, enabling them to read the transactional information within SAP ERP in real time. This solution comes packaged with Idhasoft's SAP Business All-in-One implementation service, but is also available as a standalone solution that bolts on to an existing SAP ERP environment and can be easily extended to create additional content – for aging and cash flow, for example, or for comparing operational plans versus actuals. What's more, you can deploy the entire solution in days, not weeks.

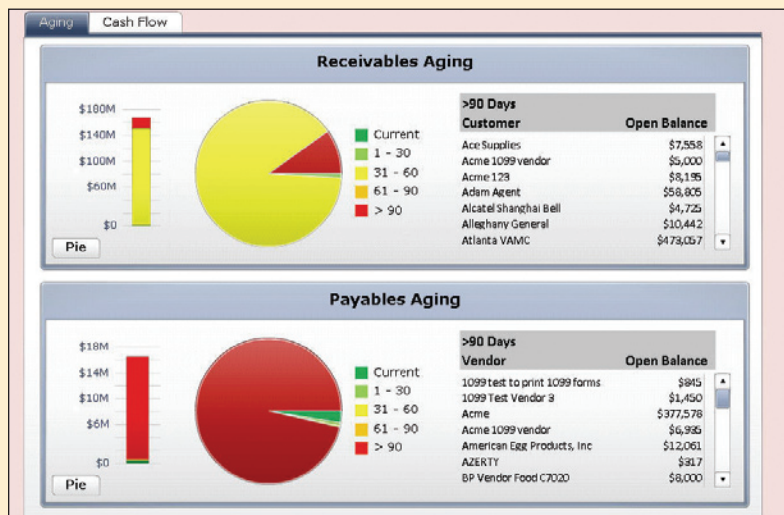


FIGURE 1 ▲ Idhasoft's Packaged Analytics dashboard



Timo Schulte
Director
Lodestone Management
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4 Steps to Ensure Your BI Strategy Is Actually Strategic

Putting together a business intelligence (BI) strategy is an important milestone for companies that want to get the most out of their BI investments. But it's not easy – most organizations need guidance on how to draft a strategy that will successfully align and coordinate all BI activities across the enterprise. Based on our past project experience, we at Lodestone Management Consultants have developed a BI Initiatives approach that enables our clients to do just that.

Lodestone's 4-Step Approach

Lodestone's BI Initiatives approach is designed to help companies make sure their BI strategy meets the reporting and analysis needs of the whole enterprise – and that any BI tools they select will enhance their BI environment. The approach comprises four stages (see **Figure 1**).

Stage #1: Strategy Check

Our consultants can assist you with an important, yet often neglected, step: determining if your BI strategy supports your overall enterprise and reporting strategy. For example, if your corporate strategy focuses on cost leadership, your BI strategy should include detailed cost-of-goods figures.

Stage #2: Assess BI Processes, Culture, Roles, and Architecture

Next, we'll assess your current BI structure to determine what processes and roles are already in place. With this assessment, our consultants can determine the best places to implement industry benchmarks, best practices, and the latest available technical options.

Stage #3: Define Future Objectives for BI

Anticipating future requirements and objectives is key to a successful BI initiative. Our consultants will help you collect, coordinate, and align feedback from your stakeholders – including the business and IT sides of the enterprise – to develop a vision of the long-term goals for your BI initiative.

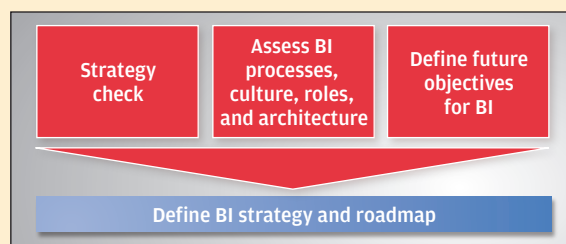
Stage #4: Define BI Strategy and Roadmap

Finally, our consultants will help you develop a comprehensive BI strategy and roadmap that outlines specific tasks and responsibilities. This includes a high-level design and architecture, as well as recommendations for which BI tools and components will best support your strategy. This roadmap will also define specific BI initiatives and a mid-term project schedule that includes milestones and resource assignments.

On top of this, we'll work with your company to develop specific KPIs to measure the success of your BI program so that you'll be able to easily demonstrate project progress and meet the expectations of your project sponsors.

Learn More

Lodestone Management Consultants is a global management consultancy committed to designing and delivering solutions that enable global companies to thrive in today's complex business environment. We are experts in designing and implementing large-scale SAP ERP and BI software architectures that leverage your existing investments and know-how. For more information, please visit www.lodestonemc.com or contact timo.schulte@lodestonemc.com. ■



Lodestone's BI Initiatives approach is designed to help companies make sure their BI strategy meets the reporting and analysis needs of the whole enterprise.

FIGURE 1 ◀ The four stages of Lodestone's BI Initiatives approach

An Exciting Time for BI

With the integration of new SAP BusinessObjects solutions into the existing SAP landscape, customers are benefiting from a sustainable and even more user-oriented BI architecture. Lodestone's four-step approach to defining a BI roadmap will help SAP customers optimally plan their BI landscape to get the most value from their SAP investments.

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Customers today are adopting SAP BusinessObjects BI tools because they find them easy to use, more visually appealing than their SAP BEx tools, and full of capabilities that aren't available in the SAP BEx toolset. Organizations are already realizing the benefits, including increased self-service and greater end-user adoption of BI. Most enterprises are also seeing expanded SAP NetWeaver BW use, which is leading to better ROI from SAP NetWeaver BW.

I strongly recommend that SAP customers adopt SAP BusinessObjects BI tools for all their reporting, ad hoc analysis, and dashboarding needs. For multidimensional (OLAP) analysis, customers should continue to use the SAP BEx analyzer tool until the next-generation OLAP analysis tool (codenamed "Pioneer") is available.

What's Next? The SAP BusinessObjects Roadmap

SAP's public BI roadmap (available via the SAP Developer Network at www.sdn.sap.com/irj/scn/vste) already unveils

key capabilities and features of the next major release of SAP BusinessObjects Enterprise, version XI 4.0:

- At the heart of the new release will be a revamped semantic layer with full support for hierarchical data structures in OLAP sources like SAP NetWeaver BW.
- SAP BusinessObjects Web Intelligence will give users full access to data hierarchies for filtering and sorting.
- The inclusion of a data federation capability will enable multisource universes and simplify analysis across multiple data sources and types.

Additionally, SAP BusinessObjects universes will include newly designed and optimized connectivity to SAP NetWeaver BW, and SAP NetWeaver BW customers will be able to leverage their existing SAP BEx queries and views via BICS access in Crystal Reports (for enterprise reporting) and Web Intelligence (for interactive analysis), in addition to Xcelsius. Customers gain the best of both worlds: the seamless reuse of existing SAP BEx investments *and* proven BI self-service capabilities based on a semantic layer that abstracts the data complexities away from the end user.

What's more, the next-generation OLAP analysis tool "Pioneer" (which is based on the SAP BEx analyzer engine) will be able to open existing SAP BEx analyzer workbooks. "Pioneer" uses the charting and interactive visualization known from tools like SAP BusinessObjects Explorer and SAP BusinessObjects Voyager – so the entire user experience is designed for ease of use and includes additional innovations to help analysts with complex, advanced analysis tasks. Again, existing SAP NetWeaver BW users will get to maximize their existing investment and gain access to a next-generation, easy-to-use analysis tool.

Recommendations: Are You Making the Most of BI?

SAP customers now have access to market-leading BI capabilities that have been optimized to support end-to-end BI for SAP environments and non-SAP data sources and applications. I encourage customers to start implementing new SAP BusinessObjects BI and IM tools today and build out a roadmap for adopting the next-generation release of SAP BusinessObjects Enterprise, version XI 4.0.

The most critical success factor for a BI program is to have a proper plan and strategy. An architectural diagram is not a BI strategy. A BI strategy needs to start with an understanding of the business pains that BI can solve (see sidebar).

To learn more about the SAP BusinessObjects portfolio, visit www.sap.com/solutions/sapbusinessobjects. ■

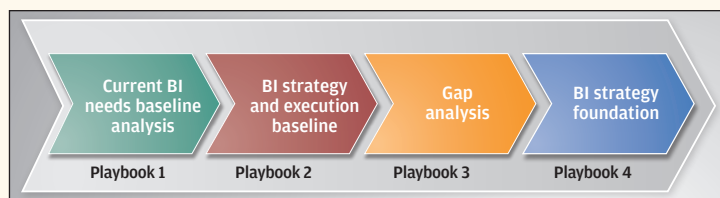
Successful BI Needs a Proper Strategy: SAP Helps You Build One

As part of our "Road to BI success with SAP" program – which includes a complete framework, content, and tools to help customers implement BI – SAP worked with Gartner Consulting to develop a BI strategy workshop (see figure below) consisting of four sections called playbooks:

- Playbook 1 includes lists of the most common business pain points – sorted by line of business (LOB) – that BI can solve. These lists are used to determine the degree of each pain point and the impact it could have on the company if addressed effectively through BI. The result is a prioritization visualized in a matrix.
- Playbook 2 provides the scope and components of a BI strategy, best practices, and an assessment of progress and results to date.
- Playbooks 3 and 4 are all about analyzing the results of playbooks 1 and 2 and translating them into solution recommendations and business benefits.

I encourage customers to use this or a similar methodology to create and articulate a BI strategy, as well as key performance indicators (KPIs) for the BI program. This is as critical as choosing the right technology to ensure success.

To learn more about the workshop, best practices, and how to build a BI strategy, please visit www.sdn.sap.com/irj/boc/bi-best-practices.



▲ A four-phased approach to developing a BI strategy