Integrating Business Intelligence (BI) with Enterprise Business Applications Can Add Value for End-Users

Integrated Business Intelligence and Reporting for Performance Management, Operational Business Intelligence and Data Management
Integrating Business Intelligence (BI) with Enterprise Business Applications Can Add Value for End-Users

Whitepaper

While ERP solutions and enterprise business applications may integrate information from legacy systems and specialized best-of-breed software, most enterprise solutions do not provide a simple dashboard, or analytical approach to information presentation. Standard reports provided by business applications do not satisfy the need for on-the-fly, end-user reports that enable the kind of sophisticated decision-making and monitoring power you need. This white paper will suggest an integrated solution that will offer more value to the end-user and eliminate the frustration of working with standardized enterprise application reporting, and reporting software packages, and spreadsheets, and the expense and delays incurred by customized reporting requests.

http://www.ElegantJBI.com
contact@ElegantJBI.com

ElegantJBI Copyright All rights Reserved.
ElegantJBI is a trademark of Elegant MicroWeb. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.
Table of Contents

Integrating Enterprise Business Applications with Business Intelligence (BI) Can Add Value for End-Users .......................................................................................................................................................... 4

Business Intelligence as an Information Catalyst.................................................................................................................... 5

Envisioning True Business Intelligence ................................................................................................................................. 6

Creating a Performance Management Framework .................................................................................................................... 10

Selecting the Appropriate BI Direction for Your Organization .............................................................................................. 12

Conclusion....................................................................................................................................................................................... 13

About ElegantJ BI ........................................................................................................................................................................ 14
Integrating Enterprise Business Applications with Business Intelligence (BI) Can Add Value for End-Users

Today’s organizations are cautious about IT investment, and all business managers are looking for the best return on investment (ROI) and timely results. These challenges can be a source of frustration to an organization using an ERP system or other enterprise business application.

In a cost-conscious, demanding business environment, organisations must evaluate the ongoing cost of maintaining, upgrading and expanding existing enterprise business applications and ERP systems that may not fully meet their needs. Where the value of an ERP or enterprise business application is stymied by cumbersome reporting, or ineffective integration of information, clients may choose to abandon implementation or expansion of enterprise solution implementation.

In a business environment where the organization may face global, regional or local competition and where information is critical to achieving goals, and winning business and keeping up with the completion, every organization must consider the timeliness of its data, as well as the integrity, quality and accessibility of that data.

The goal is to decrease costs, do more with less, and still achieve the strategy, goals and objectives of the organization. To do this, every employee must have access to information that is critical to their job, department and division.

The need for information will vary, depending upon whether the end-user is an executive who wants to monitor summary results, or a sales manager who needs weekly information on sales closings. In order to receive appropriate information from the enterprise business application or ERP system, the end-user must therefore be able to customize views, filters, reports, and alerts.

But enterprise systems fall short of the publishing and reporting flexibility and the power required to achieve these results. In order to increase the value of an ERP solution or business application in this competitive market, end-users are looking for a focus on the following issues:

- Increased focus on ROI
- System accessibility from offsite and multiple locations via web access
- Scalable solutions to ensure that enterprise systems will keep pace with new requirements
- Reduction in the cost and time required to generate new reports, and gather information
- Streamlined reporting and information gathering to reduce enterprise system processing load
- Reduced Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)
- Flexible licensing and payment terms
- Phased, timely implementation and integration schedules
- More sophisticated, advanced, ‘value-add’ modules
- Features that will provide a competitive advantage
This white paper will suggest an integrated solution that will offer more value to the end-user and eliminate the frustration of working with standardized enterprise application reporting, and reporting software packages, and spreadsheets, and the expense and delays incurred by customized reporting requests.

Organizations and end-users are more sophisticated than in the past. They demand more of their software solutions. In the past, ‘more’ simply meant that the enterprise software vendor had to provide more information.

Today, users want to quickly access filtered information and present that information in a logical, flexible format for their use – and they want to feel confident that the information is current and correct so that they can use it to make decisions.

As organizations struggle with the demand for better, more sophisticated modules and features, some have wisely focused on Business Intelligence (BI). When a BI solution is integrated with an ERP system or enterprise business application the organization can achieve the ROI results they require, and leverage a timely solution that will provide the ability to make better business decisions and operate the business with full insight into expenses, revenues, sales, finance and production as well as staffing and other critical considerations.

An integrated BI solution can also help the end-user develop and monitor Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These KPIs ensure operation of the business with full insight into expenses, revenues, sales, finance and production as well as staffing and other critical considerations.

Business Intelligence as an Information Catalyst

In today’s competitive business landscape, the challenge is to remain current and competitive in the market. Business managers and end-users cannot manage the business if they do not have current information, presented in a way that will provide true value.

Traditional reporting tools typically fall short of user expectations and organizations do not want to incur the expense or delays to constantly create custom reports. While it is true that ERP solutions and business applications do provide standard report templates as well as the ability to customize reports for use by a particular department or individual, these reports are relatively static.

Most system reporting environs provide limited redesign features which must be leveraged by programmers or technical staff, or in some instances by ‘power users’ or analysts who can develop and manipulate data columns, scripts and formulae.

Because the average organization operates in an ever-changing business environment, it is impossible to anticipate every instance in which your end-users may need a report, or the format, presentation, or integrated data required to complete the report and satisfy the end-user’s expectation.
In a classic reporting environment a user must define the requirements for a new report, and then wait for the report to be completed by the analyst or technical expert who is juggling competing priorities. Yet, if the information is to be of any value, it must be timely and accurate.

In some scenarios, the report is completed quickly, but the format or data incorporated does not fully meet expectations because the end-user forgot to include a requirement or the analyst misunderstood the details. In those cases, the analyst must redesign the report and the end-user will experience additional delays.

The more reports the analysts and technical staff must design and process, the more demand this will create on already overburdened system time and processing speed, and in that case, the entire organization will suffer a delay in the completion of other critical tasks that require the use of ERP solutions and enterprise systems that depend on the same network within the organization.

**Envisioning True Business Intelligence**

What if your managers and end-users could step into the process and design their own reports? What if the system was flexible enough to allow the user to choose data fields from various systems, or from the business application or ERP system, and produce a report on the fly? If the report did not look right, or if it did not present the correct information, the user could simply start over, and quickly produce the ‘right’ report to include in a written project summary, or to make a critical business decision.

What if the management team or line managers in your organization could design and present their own dashboards and periodic reports? If and when a new product, service or competitive situation presented a need for new information, or new reports, your team could quickly adjust the dashboard or reports to accommodate the new requirement.

Suppose your end-users could easily design and schedule reports for daily, weekly or monthly publication and send these reports to a list of users via an automatically generated email? Wouldn’t this simple solution provide flexibility and value to your users and a competitive advantage in your product or service market?

Imagine a world in which you could work in a self-service environment, designing and developing alerts and setting thresholds so that you could receive an automated report when warehouse supplies reach a minimum stock inventory, or when sales fall below projections. End-users could drill down to see more detail and find the source of the issue. Your team could confidently use true business intelligence to manage day-to-day and long-term tasks, and to change strategy and assign tasks as necessary.

By using a suitable BI system, the organization can take the processing load off overburdened ERP systems and enterprise data bases, and ensure that systems are running at optimal speed, reducing user frustration and delayed response time for system response and processing speed.
BI systems can also provide the flexibility for teams, managers, specialists and administrative personnel to create and run reports to meet the needs of an ever-changing organization, and to satisfy critical business requirements as they arise.

So, what is the advantage to the organization and the IT department?

- Focus on core business activities using relevant, integral data
- Quickly and easily implement and support the BI solution
- Assign critical technical and analytical staff to other, important, high visibility tasks
- Achieve a competitive advantage
- Improve end-user satisfaction
- Reduce Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)
- Improve ROI
- Provide additional value to end-users by offering a self-serve BI environment
- Ensure that end-users can produce simple, accurate reporting on an ad hoc basis
- Improve optimal enterprise-wide system performance and prevent system overload
- Create Performance Management framework for organisaiton
- Convert data into intelligence
While ERP solutions and enterprise business applications may integrate information from legacy systems and specialized best-of-breed software, most enterprise solutions do not provide a simple dashboard, or analytical approach to information presentation. Standard reports provided by business applications do not satisfy the need for on-the-fly, end-user reports that enable the kind of sophisticated decision-making and monitoring power you need. As you can see from the graphic above, BI integration provides an end-user interface and intelligence solution to satisfy every end-user need – even the ones you haven’t yet discovered!

When end-users attempt to use spreadsheets or standardized reports, or when they must request custom reports, they experience delays, and the frustration of redesign as well as the limitations of the software programs with which they (or their report designers) are working.
Let’s look more closely at the report environments and options available to the ERP and enterprise system users, and the organization, using an enterprise business application.

- **Report writers** may seem to be a low cost option. But, because these tools are programmer oriented, they are not meant for end-users. So this seemingly low-cost solution can mean that the organization must incur the expense of consultants and technical resources to customize and produce reports.

  The design and development environment of the typical reporting tool is inflexible, non-interactive and tightly coupled with existing enterprise applications and data structures. Producing the required report can take days or even weeks, especially if the report format is a new one and the designers must test the format before producing the report.

- **Spreadsheets** are the traditional foundation of financial reporting and other statistical, numbers-driven departments. They have been used by small and mid-size organizations alike to satisfy the demand for analysis. But spreadsheets lack integrity (designers can use an incorrect formula); traceability, consistency, and information security, and they can lead to non-compliance of security frameworks and standards.

  It is difficult, at best, to track versioning in a spreadsheet environment and there is little or no publishing or collaborative functionality within the spreadsheet software. Because the information in a spreadsheet can be out of date, and formula design can be inaccurate, the end-user often discounts the value of the data, and questions the validity of the report.

- **Business Intelligence** solutions offer the end-user a flexible, cost-effective, secure, sophisticated information delivery system, and by integrating a BI solution with an enterprise business application or ERP system, organization satisfies the end-user need to quickly and effectively manage information and decisions, receive alerts and automatic reports, and remain competitive in their product or service market.
Creating a Performance Management Framework

By integrating the BI solution with the ERP or a business application system, the organization will create a framework for advanced performance management, improve the availability and quality of data, improve end-user confidence in decision making, and reduce delays.

Business Intelligence is not reporting – it is Performance Management, and that makes all the difference in the world to your business. Because your business must remain competitive, it is critical to find, filter and analyze information quickly, and without adding additional staff or hiring expensive consultants. In short, your users need a simple picture of the information and they need to enhance and speed the decision process.

Performance Management offers a competitive advantage in a challenging business market, and it adds value for your users, and improves user and IT staff satisfaction.

When you integrate your ERP product or enterprise business application with Business Intelligence, you can leverage the following features and benefits:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balanced Scorecards</th>
<th>BI Dashboards</th>
<th>Forecasting and Predictive Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross Tab OLAP</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Graphical OLAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exception Report</td>
<td>Alerts</td>
<td>Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing</td>
<td>Delivery Agents</td>
<td>Data Extraction and Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cube Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By using the BI information system, end-users can gather, filter and present information to:

- communicate strategy and mission to stakeholders and employees
- align the operational units to the corporate strategy
- monitor and manage tactical tasks and activities

Executives can establish performance indicators to provide measurable results and compare year-over-year sales, staffing, growth and other metrics, and the BI system can help your users establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and provide tangible business measurements in an uncertain market environment. With BI integration your users can obtain clear, concise information, answer questions, and make decisions about their business in a timely fashion and with complete confidence. With Business Intelligence (BI) integration you can develop metrics, monitor results and answer critical questions with ease.
White Paper: Integrating Business Intelligence (BI) with Enterprise Business Applications Can Add Value for End-Users

Here are a few examples of the critical business questions your team could answer with BI integration:

- How do we achieve top ten brand standing in our competitive market?
- How can we reduce our overhead?
- How can we reduce churn in our customer base and ensure repeat business?
- How can we accelerate our planning and decision cycles?
- How do we monitor conditions and take early corrective action?
- What were the results of our strategy?
- How can we reduce delays in the supply chain?
- What percentage of turnover is generated annually, by new client acquisition, as compared to the previous three fiscal years?

Planning – Including scorecards and dashboards that define and monitor strategy and enable goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). With clear forecasting capability, your users can define and manage sustainable strategies predicated on the best, most current data.

Monitoring – Alerts and automated publishing and delivery mechanisms will enable your users to see dashboard information and scorecards that define ‘current state’ and allow end-users to quickly identify issues, so the team can resolve problems and handle an issue before it becomes an emergency.

Analysis – End-users can establish performance targets and analyze and report on performance to ensure that strategy, objectives and goals are aligned with actual results. Reports and analysis are produced in a concise, easy-to-read format and supported by graphical mining tools, cross tabulation features and other robust functionality.
White Paper: Integrating Business Intelligence (BI) with Enterprise Business Applications Can Add Value for End-Users

- **Directing** – Your end-users can use exception reporting, analysis alerts and automated delivery of published dashboards and reports to manage and monitor results and provide team and individual direction toward achieving corporate, departmental and individual goals.

- **Improvement** – Continuous improvement is paramount for every organization. How can we do it better, faster, with consistent quality, and in a more timely fashion? Scorecards and analytical reports and tools enable your users to adapt to change and improve performance, even in the most challenging business environs.

If you could offer your users a simple, interactive solution to help them answer these puzzling and critical business questions, you could manage strategic and tactical activities and allow technical and consulting staff to focus on other, more critical tasks, rather than on producing custom reports.

**Selecting the Appropriate BI Direction for Your Organization**

When considering the value of a BI system within an organization, companies sometimes focus on building a new BI system using existing IT staff. There are many tradeoffs and issues involved in the buy vs. build consideration. Developing requirements for a BI system, designing the system, integrating it with the existing enterprise system and providing ongoing support and upgrades is a daunting, lengthy and expensive undertaking. Building a suitable solution is time consuming and expensive and offers no immediate advantage to companies operating in competitive marketplace.

Even if the IT department within the organization has the time and the funding to build the solution, it is difficult to retain and groom the expertise required to build a robust Business Intelligence (BI) solution that will provide the features and capability required by the end-users. Without training and experience, the IT staff is likely to produce a moderate solution that will address only some of the company requirements and will, in the process, take valuable resources, funding and time away from other critical IT projects.

The more efficient, cost-effective, timely solution is to integrate a reputable, robust Business Intelligence product suite that will provide ample features and flexibility to the end-user and offer accurate, dependable support. With the right integrated solution, your end-users can easily leverage the benefits of BI and increase competitive advantage, and the speed and accuracy of team and management decisions.

In order to achieve the benefits of BI integration, as defined in this white paper, the organization must carefully select a BI product and vendor to suit its needs, and the needs of its end-users. When considering the Business Intelligence vendors in the market, it is important to objectively assess the benefits of the vendor, its product, its support services and its reputation. The organization must also consider how best to integrate BI features with the existing ERP or enterprise system. In considering BI vendors, it is therefore imperative to review the vendor experience in integrating their BI solution with the incumbent software solution.
The table below provides a starting point for assessing a Business Intelligence solution provider and its products and services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ease of Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ease of Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upgrades</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sales Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintenance Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>User Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Account Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years in Business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessibility and Dependability</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Testing Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Product Platform and Framework Accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff Accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Point of Contact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract and Relationship</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contract Terms and Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Service Level Agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stability of Vendor Business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pricing</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Licensing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible pricing and licensing to suit organizational needs and ensure cost-effective pricing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there are many other considerations that may be unique to a particular organization, this table offers some suggested areas for focus in the selection of a BI vendor.

**Conclusion**

The organizations are under increasing pressure in the market. In order to remain competitive, the organization must mitigate excessive expenses, provide cutting edge features and functionality to its end-users including excellent support, timely upgrades and valuable, ROI-focused solutions to help its employees maintain, grow and understand the business landscape.
We recommend that every organization place Business Intelligence (BI) functionality at the top of the list when considering new modules or functionality. Because ERP and enterprise application reporting and presentation tools are ‘report driven’, the average end-user can be frustrated by the need for new, more flexible reports and the time and cost required to develop these reports.

Integrated Business Intelligence provides the organization and its users with a Performance Management tool and the ability to develop and track Key Performance Indicators. As such, it is well suited to satisfy the strategic needs of the organization. But, it can also satisfy the need for ease of use, adaptability, flexibility, affordability, and an approach to reporting and information gathering that will not slow down corporate systems or require technical or consulting expertise.

Integration of an appropriate BI solution with an ERP or enterprise business application can create a competitive advantage and increase satisfaction for the organization and the end-user. But, the organization must be cautious and judicious in assessing and choosing a Business Intelligence (BI) vendor. It is important to consider BI vendor stability, product integrity and features, and most of all, the available support, stability of the BI vendor business, and continued development of the BI product suite to meet future requirements.

When BI and ERP or enterprise business applications are integrated effectively, and with careful consideration, the benefit and value to the end-user is undeniable.

About ElegantJ BI

We make Business Intelligence more accessible and affordable to organizations of all sizes, across all industries. ElegantJ BI is a single comprehensive product that provides a simple, complete portfolio of business intelligence capabilities to help organizations consolidate and filter streamlined quality information to manage core strategies and improve performance management. Designed for diverse environments, and easy access, ElegantJ BI solutions enable organizations to gain insight from a range of integrated data sources, applications and third party systems.

The ElegantJ BI suite is built on a comprehensive, innovative, leading edge BI platform, unifying web-based analytics, dynamic reporting and Business Intelligence for Performance Management, Operational BI and Data Management.

Our partners enjoy a premium partnership, OEM experience, with full sales support, affordable fees and an experienced, knowledgeable team accessible to answer questions and provide product support. We focus on sustained partnerships and mutual benefit.

We have clients around the world, in a wide range of industries and vertical markets and they have successfully deployed ElegantJ BI Solutions for competitive business advantage, leveraging simple, practical, affordable ElegantJ BI products to accomplish specific business performance goals.
To learn more about leveraging ElegantJ BI Solutions for your business, please visit our website.