Microsoft and IBM

Cognos®
software

Contents

Abstract

This white paper provides an overview of the interface and relationship between IBM Cognos® business intelligence software and Microsoft® platforms. An integrated IBM-Microsoft solution allows organizations to harmonize oftentimes divergent and multi-pronged goals. We will examine the costs of ineffective and inefficient planning and strategizing for an organization, as well as the ways in which IBM Cognos business intelligence tools, combined with Microsoft technologies, enable businesses to find planning solutions with the dual benefit of world-leading components and extensive service and support networks.

Overview

Corporate performance management begins with a solid foundation of consistent corporate data. Microsoft technology as your data warehousing platform gives you a powerful and reliable foundation for helping employees contribute to corporate goals. IBM Cognos business intelligence tools work effortlessly from this foundation to let organizations plan, monitor, and understand performance across the enterprise. A core strength of IBM Cognos products is providing a unified view of the business so that everyone's key performance indicators align with strategy. This single version of the truth lets business people across a company, as well as customers, suppliers, and partners, make rapid and informed decisions that contribute to the direction of the company as a whole.

Ultimately, combining solutions from IBM and Microsoft lets people run their business better. The commitment the two companies share to open standards and protocols allows the tools to work together seamlessly and extend the capabilities of each. This paper demonstrates how, when deployed together, IBM and Microsoft solutions fuel confident business improvement.

Business problems

Any organization, large or small, is a mosaic of different groups, different perspectives, and often conflicting goals. Departments have their own hot issues that will be foreign to an outsider. Purchasing might want to identify the best vendor over product lifetime, while marketing may be seeking the origin of its sales opportunities and inventory minimizing out-of-stock days. Executives planning for profitability need to reconcile opposing goals and make corporate strategy achievable by all. Managing performance on the departmental level is a step in the right direction, but ensuring that all departments are working in the direction of corporate strategy is what leads to lasting profitability. Tying issues from one department to issues in another, identifying current challenges, and planning for future performance — this is corporate performance management (CPM). The IBM Cognos-Microsoft business solution provides a means of resolving CPM issues using technologies that are both complementary and world-class.

Business drivers

The need for corporate performance management has an important business driver. The maintenance and proliferation of opposing goals within an organization means that individual departmental goals may conflict with overall corporate strategy. For example, a strategy of developing deep customer relationships may be unachievable for a customer service organization rewarded on the number of calls completed daily. The various entrenched viewpoints and goals find their ways into and define departmental systems. While these systems are often technologically separate, when they try to speak to each other, it's usually more than technology keeping them apart.

The solution

IBM and Microsoft have joined forces to create a complete, fully integrated, end-to-end enterprise solution that addresses the CPM challenge. Featuring award-winning, best-of-breed IBM Cognos software and a wide range of Microsoft products, the IBM-Microsoft solution provides everything needed to effectively manage corporate performance.

IBM Cognos software enables and integrates with all three aspects of effective corporate performance management: planning, monitoring, and understanding through superior reporting and analysis.

Following are several applications of the solution that meet the needs of conventional corporate performance management:

Planning that drives performance

Effective performance begins with enterprise planning that integrates budgets across departments, divisions, and locations and translates corporate objectives into concrete financial and tactical plans. The IBM Cognos Enterprise Planning component enables top-down objective setting based on bottom-up contributions from every corner of the enterprise. It automates the creation of personalized plans for business units, and integrates feedback from all contributors. The result? Overall corporate strategies are translated into specific practical plans that share a common purpose and meaning.

IBM Cognos BI software integrates with the planning components that enable:

- **Modeling and target setting**

    The sophisticated, cross-functional modeling capabilities of IBM Cognos solutions accelerate the development of business models. Dynamic linking ensures that individual components of a model can interact in real-time, providing overall planning consistency.

- **Planning, budgeting, and forecasting**

  IBM takes an organization's overall strategy plan and breaks it down into the activities, decisions, and initiatives necessary to achieve it.

- **Consolidation and financial reporting**

  IBM gives our customers a single, global view of information by consolidating multiple diverse ledgers into one common chart of accounts structure. Faster consolidation and reporting cycles leave more time for in-depth analysis and faster adjustments to plan.

Monitoring performance

IBM Cognos scorecarding technology lets you monitor performance against plan, aligning everyone in the organization around an agreed-upon strategy, measurable goals, and the tactics needed to achieve them. Using intuitive dashboards and other graphical presentations, scorecarding ensures that:

- Plans are communicated as relevant, meaningful goals

- Strategies, people, and performance are linked through metrics

- Quality and performance methodologies are supported with metrics

Scorecarding is a way to take your company's strategy off the boardroom wall and make it relevant and real to people throughout your organization. Through scorecarding, everyone in the company — at all levels and across all departments — has a clear understanding of how they are doing and how their decisions affect overall performance.

Understanding through superior reporting and analysis

IBM Cognos software delivers the most comprehensive and fully integrated set of business intelligence capabilities in the industry. The software shares common framework services such as security, metadata, and user portal. Beyond this integration and breadth of capacity, each business intelligence capability is best in its class.

IBM Cognos BI provides the capabilities needed to understand what drives performance. When monitoring shows that key indicators are out of line with expectations, a wide range of reporting and analysis capabilities help users find out why. Reporting and analysis provides answers to questions about customer relations, sales, finance, supply chain management — any aspect of the business — and provides a solid framework for better decisions and purposeful action.

IBM Cognos reporting and analysis components include:

- **Reporting.** Users can create reports from any data source for consistent, fact-based decision-making.

- **Analysis.** Online analytical processing (OLAP) means users can explore large volumes of summarized data in a variety of formats with fast response times, drilling through to the details they need.

- **Ad hoc query.** Users can engage in real-time exploration of corporate data resources to quickly answer specific operational questions on any aspect of performance.

- **Scorecarding.** Scorecards deliver measurable metrics that let users know immediately where they stand, and enable them to manage their performance.

- **Dashboarding.** Users can view and analyze complex data in intuitive graphical formats, including dashboard layouts, geographical maps, pie or bar graphs, or 3D graphs with navigational capabilities.

- **Event detection.** Time-critical business intelligence is automatically delivered to decision-makers through email and wireless technologies, enabling them to focus quickly on what needs immediate attention.

- **Data preparation.** Users can unite data from different platforms into an accurate and consistent data foundation.

By providing users at every level of the organization with the information they need to plan in the context of overall corporate goals, monitor their progress toward those goals based on a shared corporate view, and analyze and report on any relevant aspect of corporate activity, IBM Cognos BI enables everyone in the enterprise to take responsibility for, and contribute to, effective corporate performance management.

Customer testimonial: Brayton International

Brayton International, a furniture manufacturer headquartered in North Carolina, achieved a 576 per cent ROI over three years by deploying IBM Cognos reporting, analysis and ETL solutions. The payback period was one month.[*]

"The solution gave us everything we wanted, right out of the box," said Joseph Erba, President and CEO of Brayton International. "We were able to extract data from our sales and marketing data cubes and transform it into information about where our products are selling, who's buying them, and whether we're focusing our energies on the appropriate parts of the business."

Challenges

Brayton's ERP system consolidated information from its various business units, but manually creating scheduled and ad hoc reports was time consuming and the system crashed often. Since each business unit's information was stored in a separate repository with no data sharing, executive management had no way of analyzing overall sales performance by variables such as region, customer, and industry vertical.

The company considered building an in-house application, but decided on the IBM Cognos data preparation, analysis, and reporting products as a cost effective alternative.

Results

Because of IBM Cognos products, Brayton was able to

- Reduce reporting time from four hours to a few minutes

- Reduce ERP downtime from 90 minutes a week to a few hours a year

- Improve sales management by identifying new sales opportunities and analyzing profitability of current customers

* Nucleus Research compared the cost of software, hardware, personnel, and training over a three-year period to the benefits, comprising increased productivity and avoidance of in-house building costs. Increased revenue from improved sales management was not counted.

Why IBM?

Leaders choose leaders. That's why they choose Microsoft, and that's why they choose IBM Cognos software for their business intelligence needs. IBM Cognos solutions are the recognized leaders in the business intelligence marketplace. For over 30 years we have championed innovation and helped our 22,000 customers achieve the next level of performance. Our software has won hundreds of awards and is the solution of choice for over 80 percent of the Fortune 500. IBM offers these smart companies many key competitive differentiators. Here are just a few:

Lower Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)

Many organizations currently use multiple solutions to meet their reporting requirements. These solutions, which are most often deployed departmentally, must all be supported concurrently. IT managers can decrease the costs and complexity of their reporting environment with a single, Web-based reporting solution that can address all reporting needs.

Zero-footprint

IBM Cognos software's zero-footprint, Web-based user interface lets users access corporate information through Internet Explorer or other browsers without any additional software. No plug-ins to install and no end-user complexity translates into a lower cost of ownership and higher customer satisfaction.

Flexible options for presenting information

Users can arrange report objects on the page simply by dragging and dropping them into a report authoring window. The adaptive report authoring environment automatically arranges report objects in the window each time one is added or removed.

IBM Cognos multidimensional analysis software uses familiar, Web-like actions such as drag and drop to simplify the task of exploring corporate information. New capabilities let users project current data forward, to see trends better.

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Broad-based information delivery

IBM Cognos BI software lets customers deliver business intelligence to mobile employees, such as alerts and notifications on key events, through Microsoft Outlook® or other email packages. Event detection and business intelligence shortens the time between an event happening and the actions to respond to it. Reducing that gap is a competitive advantage.

Scalability

IBM offers scalability proven in the lab—and with customers. IBM built its reporting architecture from the ground-up to scale to any size of deployment. The flexible, n-tier architecture ensures failover protection and dynamic load balancing for around-the-clock availability. IBM Cognos reporting tools support both Microsoft Windows® and UNIX® operating systems, including mixed environments.

Quick to deploy

For IT departments, IBM Cognos BI is easy to move from design and test environments to full deployment. Administrators can configure entire systems centrally. Centralized administration gives IT the functionality to manage business intelligence applications from one location. With a continuing commitment to ease of use, IBM reduces the day-to-day impact on valuable IT resources.

Easy to customize

IBM Cognos products provide an integration framework that brings our BI to a wider range of applications and environments, enabling integrators and developers to add custom features applicable in their own environments. In addition, our customers can adapt IBM Cognos business intelligence capabilities and customize their BI portal using IBM Cognos Web Services.

A truly global solution

With IBM Cognos BI, companies can run reports in multiple languages, with out-of-the-box support for English, French, German, and Japanese—all with one metadata model. This reduces IT workload, lowers the TCO for BI software, and helps companies compete in the global marketplace.

The Microsoft technical foundation for CPM

The foundation on which IBM Cognos software operates — the underlying back end of the IBM-Microsoft solution — is comprised of leading software technologies from Microsoft. These include operating systems such as Microsoft Windows 2000 and XP, database technology such as Microsoft SQL Server®, Web technologies such as Microsoft IIS® and Microsoft Internet Explorer, Microsoft Office desktop software, and Microsoft SharePoint® content management software. Together, they make up Microsoft's BI-enabled enterprise platform.

Operating system

Microsoft Windows: Multipurpose network operating systems for businesses of all sizes, the various versions of Microsoft Windows let you share files and printers reliably and securely, run thousands of compatible business applications, build Web applications, handle a variety of media, connect to the Internet, and more. Microsoft Windows lets you meet the network needs of security, reliability, availability, and scalability.

Database

Microsoft SQL Server: Microsoft SQL Server is the enterprise data management platform with the lowest implementation and maintenance costs in the industry. It integrates heterogeneous IT systems, allows fast application development, supports XML and Internet queries, and maximizes capital and operating budgets. Microsoft SQL Server provides BI analysis tools, which provide a foundation for IBM Cognos BI tools. Extensive management and development tools such as self-tuning and wizards simplify administration.

Web

Microsoft Internet Information Services®: Microsoft IIS Web server provides a reliable, manageable, and scalable Web application infrastructure for all versions of Microsoft Windows Server 2003. IIS increases availability and lowers administration costs. IIS supports the Microsoft Dynamic Systems Initiative (DSI) with automated health monitoring, process isolation, and improved management capabilities.

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Microsoft Internet Explorer: This flexible browser lets you customize your layout, manage pictures and other media, and find and revisit the sites you need. Ensure Web privacy by managing cookies, set levels of security with security zones, and help block access to objectionable content. Fault collection services identify potential problems to be fixed in future updates, ensuring reliability.

Desktop

Microsoft Office: The Microsoft Office system provides integrated programs, servers, and services to address business needs and increase productivity. The wide range of office applications includes MicrosoftAccess® (database), Microsoft Excel® (spreadsheets), Microsoft FrontPage® (Web editor), Microsoft Outlook® (mail), Microsoft PowerPoint® (presentations), Microsoft SharePoint (content management), and Microsoft Word (word processing).

Microsoft SharePoint: Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server connects people and information. It integrates information from various systems into one secure place, using single sign-on and a shared search. Users can quickly find relevant information by personalizing the portal content and layout. Audience targeting aims information to people based on their defined membership criteria.

Customer Testimonial: GAB Robins

GAB Robins operates in 38 countries and has over 600 offices worldwide. For this global independent loss-adjuster, the quick settlement of a claim is pivotal to success.

GAB Robins' traditional reporting method used a combination of Access, Excel, and the manual re-keying of information, but the sheer volume of information to be calculated within each claim was proving the system error-prone and time-consuming. Degree of damage, level of compensation, cost of repair, and loss are some of the many variables to be considered with each of its 1.7 million claims a year. Better customer care was needed to maintain competitive advantage.

Results

IBM Cognos products have built on the company's combination of Microsoft Windows NT and Microsoft SQL Server technologies to increase GAB Robins staff productivity and ability to analyze information. Faster access – from days to hours – to more detailed information has resulted in better customer service. IBM Cognos products have also allowed the company to

- Assess claims more thoroughly

- Respond to clients' needs with personalized reports

- Evaluate the amount they must hold in reserve for each claim

- Increase the number of claims assessed

- Execute trend analyses, such as losses by geographical region

- Retain business they might otherwise have lost

The fast implementation and ease of use of the IBM Cognos solution was instrumental in helping GAB Robins move to a managed reporting environment. "Previous to the Cognos solution, we would have to jump through hoops to access the information," said Dr Barry Wetherilt, IT director at GAB Robins. "What might have taken days to accomplish with our old system, we can now do in hours. And because the Cognos solution is more efficient, this means fewer chances of error."

An integrated solution

The following table shows how the IBM Cognos and Microsoft solutions are integrated:

MS COMPONENT	IBM COGNOS PROGRAMS INTEGRATION
WINDOWS	IBM Cognos software runs on the Windows operating system, even in clustered environments. It leverages Windows security and scales well. For example, IBM Cognos ReportNet deployments of 20,000 users yielded an average response time of 1.4 seconds and 6.7 million Adobe® PDF pages per day of batch reports.
SQL SERVER	IBM Cognos products deliver rich BI to any user across the organization, using the Microsoft SQL relational database and Analysis Services as the source for data. IBM Cognos tools support advanced functionality in Microsoft SQL Server and Analysis Services and extends messaging through such features as notifications, dashboards, and scorecards. IBM Cognos ReportNet supports Microsoft Active Directory for security and can use Microsoft SQL Server functions such as federated database servers, XML, multiple instances of Microsoft SQL Server, and failover clustering support. IBM Cognos ReportNet, IBM Cognos 8 Planning, and IBM Cognos Metrics Manager can use SQL Server as a repository. IBM Cognos DecisionStream can build and generate Analysis Services cubes. IBM Cognos products can use a single sign-on for a simpler user experience.
DTS	IBM Cognos solutions leverage the flexibility of Microsoft Data Transformation Services (DTS) by reading and writing DTS packages as sources and targets.
INTERNET INFORMATION SERVICES	IBM Cognos solutions support and integrate with the Microsoft IIS Web server.
INTERNET EXPLORER	Because IBM Cognos products are zero-footprint, users can access corporate information through Microsoft Internet Explorer or other browsers without any additional software. They can use Microsoft IE for any CPM activity, such as viewing and bookmarking reports, performing queries and analysis, scorecarding, and dashboarding.
OFFICE	Microsoft Outlook can be used to deliver IBM Cognos NoticeCast event notifications and to email reports in various formats such as Adobe PDF and HTML. Office documents can include embedded IBM Cognos reports. IBM Cognos business intelligence and planning products include Microsoft Excel add-ins and plug-ins.
SHAREPOINT	IBM provides APIs and Web Services to deliver customized BI content through Microsoft SharePoint Web Parts. IBM Cognos' Service-oriented Architecture, an open Web-based architecture, allows IBM Cognos products to integrate with Microsoft .NET applications. IBM Cognos' service-level APIs let Microsoft Visual Studio® or Microsoft .NET developers use the WSDL from IBM and develop Microsoft .NET code.

Conclusion

IBM and Microsoft have established a close, proactive, and strategic partnership. The result is that organizations planning or using a data warehouse on the Microsoft platform can easily implement an IBM Cognos solution that meets their unique needs. By combining technologies from these two market leaders, businesses can deploy business intelligence functionality across the enterprise.

IBM understands that Microsoft is a key player in many of our customers' businesses. Therefore, to help our mutual customers become more successful, IBM strives to both embrace and extend the Microsoft data warehousing platform by working with Microsoft on a variety of initiatives at both the technical and business levels.

One result of partnership and certification is that you can be certain your combined IBM Cognos-Microsoft solution is a seamless interweaving of best-of-breed components. Second, the relationship allows you to take advantage of the extensive service and support networks of both companies. This ensures that you will always have access to the expertise that will help you keep your data warehouse and business intelligence solutions running exactly the way they're supposed to.

About IBM Cognos BI and Performance Management

IBM Cognos business intelligence (BI) and performance management solutions deliver world-leading enterprise planning, consolidation and BI software, support and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. IBM Cognos solutions bring together technology, analytical applications, best practices, and a broad network of partners to give customers an open, adaptive and complete performance solution. Over 23,000 customers in more than 135 countries around the world choose IBM Cognos solutions.

For further information or to reach a representative: www.ibm.com/cognos

Request a call

To request a call or to ask a question, go to www.ibm.com/cognos/contactus. An IBM Cognos representative will respond to your enquiry within two business days.

Endnotes

IBM is certified in the Microsoft Data Warehousing Certification for Business Intelligence Applications program, and IBM Cognos PowerPlay is certified to work with SQL Server 2000.