Open security with IBM Cognos 8 BI

"In the 1980s, it was about globalization. In the 1990s, it was about the Internet. Now it's about security—or should be."

– Marcia Stephanek, CIO Insight 1

Business intelligence (BI) is about sharing information, but good BI pays equal attention to its converse: securing information. Corporations need to strike a balance between making information both accessible to those who should have it, and protecting it from those who shouldn't. Of course, effective security should not be at the expense of efficient operations, nor should it cost a fortune to deploy and manage. How do you roll out an effectively-secured business intelligence infrastructure that leverages your existing security investments?

Overview: Open security with IBM Cognos 8 BI

Your security strategy concentrates on three main areas:

- Authentication – who are your users? Your information should be readily accessible but only to the right people.
- Authorization – once they are authenticated, what do your users have permission to access? Each person or group of people may need to know different things, even as detailed as the column or row of data.
- Encryption – how do you protect both data transmissions and storage?

Specific features of open security with IBM Cognos 8 BI

Sending and storing unsecured data exposes it to various risks. IBM Cognos 8 Business Intelligence, the first single, all-in-one, entirely Web-based BI software, addresses the security concerns of large and small organizations alike. It lets you leverage your existing security infrastructure where it makes sense, and provides simple, straightforward application security and encryption. IBM Cognos 8 BI provides anonymous access rights, row and column data security, 168-bit data transmission encryption, and many other features that make it easy to balance ready access with ironclad security.

Transparent authentication

The first principle of security – authentication – involves identifying the user. Your organization's existing security model already ensures users have the right to enter the system by employing "namespaces" of user IDs and passwords.

Security-agnostic authentication

IBM Cognos 8 BI leverages your existing security model's namespaces for user authentication and single sign-on. Whether you have NTLM, LDAP, Active Directory, Netegrity, SAP, existing Cognos security, or a combination of these, IBM Cognos 8 BI draws on these models when defining and maintaining user, group, and role names, IDs, passwords, regional settings, and personal preferences. No rework or duplicated security is required. IBM Cognos 8 BI, like IBM Cognos ReportNet™ before it, leverages multiple security authentication services simultaneously where necessary.

IBM Cognos 8 BI is security agnostic – it works with virtually every available security model. Where required, an API lets you accommodate custom authentication models and solutions. IBM Cognos 8 BI does not replicate existing enterprise models to enable application security. This means a reduction in overall IT complexity and cost of ownership because you don't need to administer and maintain multiple security systems. It lets your organization leverage its "best of breed" selection in authentication providers.

Log on to multiple namespaces

Your organization might have several security sources in-house. It might have Active Directory for email security and Netegrity SiteMinder for application security. IBM Cognos 8 BI can leverage these types of heterogeneous environments. While users may authenticate in one provider initially, they can log on to other namespaces later in the same session without having to log out of the first namespace. This gives specific users greater access to corporate information as needed. Organizations may also enable anonymous user access. For example, with an Internet reporting application, users may access IBM Cognos 8 BI anonymously with limited, read-only access.

Security flexibility

One typical security issue involves supporting distinct audiences or capabilities with a single instance of a BI solution. For example, let's say your company has an intranet community as well as a partner channel extranet.

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Internal users generally have greater information access then those outside the organization. Previously, this required metadata models for each user group – an inefficient practice that results in a less effective BI environment.

With IBM Cognos 8 BI, you can use a single model to support multiple user communities. Viewpoints or packages of the single model are published to the users. Only the allowable data for each user group is contained in the published package. Changes to the underlying data model are propagated through each of the available and relevant packages.

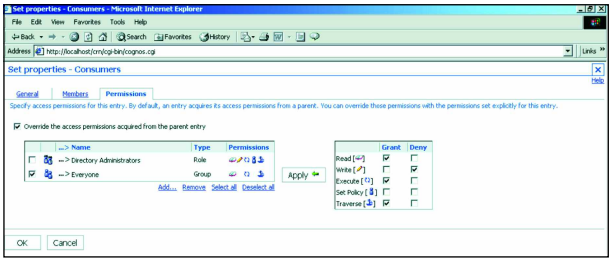
In addition, you can secure all objects in IBM Cognos 8 BI, setting permission rights for use by the appropriate users or groups. Objects include folders, sub-folders, individual reports, analyses, metrics, scorecards and dashboards, events and alerts, shared group-based portal pages, data connections, and IBM Cognos 8 BI capabilities (such as authoring).

Application authorization

Authorization is the process of granting or denying data access to users, groups, and roles, and specifying what they are allowed to do with that data. Once granted access to a resource (such as a data source, report, or folder), users will be shown only what they are authorized to see.

With a single click, assign permissions for selected users, groups, and roles, and grant or deny permission to view, change, or perform other activities.

Organizations can leverage the users and groups defined in their existing authentication provider(s) to set users and roles for application authorization, that is, to set access permissions to content in IBM Cognos 8 BI. These users can also become members of groups and roles specific to IBM Cognos 8 BI. Groups can be defined in either the security provider or the Cognos namespace. Once permissions are set for one or more users or groups, other users or groups have no access unless that access is explicitly granted. If a report or folder has no permissions set, they will be acquired from the parent object.



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Server affinity

IBM Cognos 8 BI can use defined groups and roles to control the routing of incoming requests to specific application servers. For example, a group of users in a specific geographical location or department can be assured that a local server will handle all of their business intelligence requests. This allows optimization of incoming requests facilitates administration across large installations, and, in tandem with auditing, enables simplified charge-back mechanisms for shared resources.

Basic and enhanced encryption

Stored or transmitted data can be vulnerable unless properly secured through encryption. You can encrypt IBM Cognos 8 BI data and communications by using the 56- bit encryption mechanism provided with the software. If you require enhanced security, you can obtain enhanced encryption modules separately from Cognos. These modules will let you configure IBM Cognos 8 BI to use encryption algorithms with a key size up to 168-bit.

Summary

IBM Cognos 8 Business Intelligence makes it easy for you to distribute critical information to key decision makers while ensuring that same information does not fall into the wrong hands. Leveraging your existing security eliminates the need for reworked or duplicated security. Authorization is quick and easy to set, and users and groups from your existing security model can be used. Data content and transmission integrity is ensured through encryption. The result is minimal administrative burden, cost containment, and high scalability.

About Cognos, an IBM company

Cognos, an IBM Company, is the world leader in business intelligence and performance management solutions. It provides world-class enterprise planning and BI software and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. Cognos was acquired by IBM in February 2008. For more information, visit **www.cognos.com**.

For more Information

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