



Business Intelligence & Information Management
Symposium Community

Trip Report

Business Intelligence & Information Management Symposium Community

Key Takeaways

Interest in business intelligence (BI) is stronger than ever, driven by the volume of transactions and interactions, the increasing complexity of business processes and the rise in the number of sources of information. New demands from business leaders to gain in-depth understanding of what's happening in their business, and to better predict what will happen in the future, is driving demand to exploit BI, and to better manage the information resources and infrastructure that support it.

This interest was reflected at Symposium, where 466 attendees in the BIIM Community flocked to the more than one-dozen presentations in the track. Key takeaways in these sessions included the need for BIIM leaders to address:

- **Changing information architecture requirements.** BI and performance management applications place significant stress on information management infrastructures, most of which were designed to support older reporting and transactional systems, and are unprepared to handle the rapid change associated with BI and performance management applications. BIIM leaders must examine — and consider re-architecting — their information infrastructures to ensure they can support the analysis and applications associated with BI and performance management.
- **New organization model and program management imperatives.** More effort and energy must be focused on organizational and program management issues to make BI successful. New models are needed to effectively unite IT experts, business analysts, data stewards and business users. BIIM leaders must ensure they have the organizational structures, as well as the business, IT and program management competencies, needed to provide the advanced information analysis that will be required to support key business decisions.
- **Market consolidation.** Acquisitions are changing the face of the analytics and information management market — a point brought home dramatically on the opening day of Symposium, when news broke that SAP had announced plans to buy Business Objects. BIIM leaders must reassess their vendor and product portfolios in a changing market, and begin to consider the few strategic vendors they will align with as consolidation continues.

Conference Highlights

Business Intelligence and Information Management Role Scenario

With a broader set of users, applications and business processes, BI's value is more focused on business impact and transformation than ever. Harnessing BI to deliver the information needed to address this trend is difficult, however, given the diverse sources and views of information in today's enterprise. According to the latest Gartner EXP survey of CIOs, only 36% believe their management is using the right information to run the business. To meet the challenge, BI leaders should adopt Gartner's BI and Performance Management Framework to create a people, process and technology strategy for effective BI. They also need to assess BI maturity to benchmark their current state and identify gaps that require action to meet future goals.

Recommendations:

- Shift the focus of BIIM beyond technology toward becoming a core business competency.
- Define BIIM activity cycle leadership, skills, contributors and sponsorship, and identify the risks of not executing successfully.
- Manage BIIM-related technology and applications as a strategic portfolio in order to adapt to process, technology, workplace and market changes.

The Business Intelligence Competency Center: Organizing for Success

The BI competency center (BICC) is responsible for driving integration and alignment across all layers of the BI framework. Its goal is to leverage BI resources and investments to bring higher returns to the enterprise — more insight, better use of BI skills and information, lower costs, higher-quality data and increased agility. The focus of BICC activities will evolve from rules-driven decision support to focus more on using information to drive decision making and better manage performance.

Recommendations:

- Take inventory of your organization's BI initiatives and skills.
- Define the business objectives that the BICC will meet, and the executives it should report to.
- Identify the appropriate funding and organizational strategy. "Sell" the BICC for new BI programs.



Mastering Master Data Management

Wherever multiple systems contain customer, product, supplier and other data, master data management (MDM) is needed. In MDM, the master data — the mission-critical data objects and core information of the enterprise — is drawn from various data stores and systems, and a separate team and discipline is devoted to managing it. MDM cannot be addressed only during BI processes, because they fall too far “downstream” — data quality issues must be addressed at the operational end, not just the analytical one. Without effective governance, MDM will fail — not only because the data spans a wide range of people and jobs, but also because data owners may want more autonomy, or fear that MDM will add costs or time to their processes.

Recommendations:

- Review your organization’s capabilities and challenges for creating a single source of master data.
- Focus on key business problems. Build a business case that's based on hard benefits.
- Apply best practices for data governance and change management.

Emerging Trends and Technologies in Business Intelligence

BI goes beyond information delivery to include the ability to understand the business and to optimize performance and efficiency. Emerging BI trends and technologies are usually focused on empowering users or optimizing business process. BI capabilities will become more pervasive in operational and workplace applications as organizations seek to use BI to lead, support decisions, manage and optimize their businesses, and drive business transformation. In strategy-driven BI, instead of collecting BI requirements from the bottom up, activities are directed by top-down requirements that directly link to corporate strategy. In this area, the lines between corporate performance management (CPM) and BI will blur. Emergent data-mining tools will shift the burden from the analyst to the business user or IT support. In-memory analytics will be used as a performance layer, not as a substitute for a data warehouse.

Recommendations:

- Expand your vision of BI beyond just delivering reports to include process- and strategy-driven BI.
- Push BI platform capabilities beyond information delivery, to include analysis to discover new insights and the integration capabilities to make them actionable.

Data Integration Technology and Architecture: Building Your Data Circulatory System

Data integration comprises the techniques, tools and architectures to consistently access and deliver data — across all enterprise data subjects and structures — to meet the requirements of enterprise applications and business processes. It provides the foundation required for the success of initiatives such as BI and MDM. Data integration architectures and technologies have historically been deployed in a tactical and fragmented manner, but they can be unified in an information infrastructure to better organize, move and exchange data across the enterprise.

Recommendations:

- Establish a vision for information infrastructure with data integration capabilities at its core. This is the engine that makes your information management strategy real.
- Extend thinking about data integration beyond extraction, transformation and loading (ETL) to include service-oriented, interenterprise and real-time deployment.
- Approach vendor and product selections carefully — seek breadth, strong metadata and modeling, and openness.

What People Asked About

Many issues on the minds of Symposium attendees focused on information infrastructure and data integration issues. One CTO noted that his organization, a municipal authority, has 14 data stores with disparate data, “so we’ve got an aggregation problem right off the bat.” A technology VP for a large nonprofit organization cited its need to address data quality issues that are undermining the ability to perform advanced analytics. “We’re finding problems downstream in the data warehouse that need to be addressed upstream, closer to the data entry source.”

In one-on-ones with analysts, a major attendee question concerned how to best prepare the enterprise’s information infrastructure to support CPM and advanced analytics. Other hot topics in these meetings included how best to market BI to the business, and which metrics best help measure BI success.

As an example of the advice offered in response to such queries, Gartner’s answer on the metrics issue is to use measures of information relevance, accuracy, consistency and timeliness (RACT). If information users are surveyed on the value of BI-provided information in each of these four dimensions, the results can be used to baseline improvements in the effectiveness of BI.

Questions and answers from Symposium sessions included the following:

- **What practical advice can you offer on developing a proof of concept (POC) to demonstrate the value of a data warehouse BI solution?** POCs are great for making people aware of what information is there. But don't assume: "If we build it they will come." You'll need to do a lot of selling and marketing. It also helps to have the POC hook into a high-profile business goal or initiative. Recognize that you don't have to build a full prototype at first — you can start with a mockup that illustrates the kinds of information can be obtained and used to help manage the business.
- **Just as a customer relationship management (CRM) system can act as a customer data hub and an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system can act as a product data hub, could you make one of these systems your MDM hub that all the other applications have to work around?** Possibly, but those applications were not designed to manage master data for the rest of the business, so you'd be straining their capabilities. It could work in some environments, but it's not a common practice.
- **My company is embarking on an ERP initiative. Should implement a stand-alone MDM system before we implement the ERP one, or afterward?** Implement MDM first, or the architecture will likely be wrong. It's much harder to fix the foundation after you've already built the first floor.
- **Most analytical processing today is still batch-oriented. Do you see this technology changing to deliver more real-time capabilities?** Yes, but it's also important to recognize that that batch cycles are accelerating. Many organizations now run two daily batches, and that's all you need for most analysis. You need to classify applications by reporting needs. Identify the ones where daily or twice-daily reporting is adequate, and where you need information that's current as of one hour ago, one minute ago and so on. To get down to the second or millisecond level, you'll need special software and architecture, so you need to specifically identify the limited cases where you'll need that capability.

Things to Watch For

- The focus of BI will increasingly shift from an IT-driven to a business-driven one. This means that IT leaders supporting BI must continually link their activities back to evolving business objectives, and also consider how to push more of the use of analytical tools out of IT and into the business units. This trend was reflected in the plans of several attendees who spoke of the need to enable businesspeople to do more of their own analysis. "Today, our IT organization has all the BI expertise, but we have huge demand and limited resources," one attendee noted. "I'm a big believer in giving people the tools they need to do it themselves, and getting IT out of the way."

Other trends to watch include:

- The evolving role of the "future worker" will pose new challenges for BIIM leaders — namely, how to build the infrastructure needed to support greater information agility, portability and reuse.
- It is most common for BICCs to report into the CIO, but in the future, Gartner expects more BICCs to report to leaders on the business side, such as the COO or CFO.
- Data mining will play a larger role in future BI deployment — particularly in a process-driven BI architecture. Other emerging technologies to watch include interactive visualization, in-memory analytics and text mining.
- During the next three years, more than two-thirds of large organizations with heterogeneous data environments will implement MDM.
- BIIM leaders must begin to understand and plan for the impact of Web 2.0 techniques, technologies and applications on their information management programs and infrastructures.
- By 2011, the convergence of data integration, data quality and metadata management tools will be complete, but only 20% of vendors in this space will offer tightly integrated solutions.

ITxpo Sponsors for the Business Intelligence & Information Management Symposium Community

Gartner Events
 premier
sponsors

AT&T
Autonomy
CA
Cisco
Dell
Fast
HP
IBM
Intel
LANDesk
Microsoft
NEC
Novell
Romania IT
Sterling Commerce
Symantec
Endeca
Vanco
Verizon Business

BI & Datawarehousing Marketplace

1010data
DATAlegro
ESRI
OpenPages
SAS
Sybase, Inc.

Portals, Content & Collaboration Marketplace

Adobe Systems, Inc. (Marketplace
Sponsor)
DIALCOM
Endeca
Google, Inc.
Hyland Software
Open Text
PostPath, Inc.
RSD
Systemware, Inc.
Vivisimo, Inc.
Xerox