



8 STEPS TO BI SUCCESS

Choosing the Ideal Business Intelligence Solution



Today's digital world has released an explosion of data, and Business Intelligence (BI) is evolving. Innovative companies now rely on Business Intelligence to instantly assimilate, transform and analyze this endless stream of information to make perfectly-timed business decisions. Choosing the perfect BI solution to ensure your company thrives and maintains a competitive edge into the future may be daunting – it can seem like a big mountain to climb.

Get Onboard

In times past, cost and complexity of BI may have outweighed any perceived payback, but the future is now, and it's essential to emphasize the value of company data to everyone in your organization. Make sure that everyone's clued up and ready for the coming transition.

Get Flowing

The key to BI sustainability and success is to ensure data is flowing smoothly through every internal and external system in your organization. Critical strategic choices should only be made on comprehensive information; then you can expect the best results. Ensure you are harnessing data from every endpoint - including those on the horizon.

Get Automated

So, your company understands the value of its data, and that this data is harvested at every point and opportunity. Now you can concentrate on sharing the right information with the right people at the right time and place. Manual report distribution is a sure-fire way to sabotage your entire BI strategy and bottom line; automation is simply the only path to take for secure, efficient and reliable delivery - but which tool do you choose?

Climb the 8 Steps to BI Success...

With dozens of BI solutions available, what are the 'must-haves'? What features will bring you the quickest time to value plus meet the flexibility, scalability and budgetary needs of your organization?

No pressure - but the BI solution you invest in today has far-reaching implications for your organization's success tomorrow.

So strap on those crampons as we scale those eight essential steps to take in making your big decision - let's get your company equipped for the future and performing at its peak!



1. Secure Yet Accessible



Your BI tool should be both flexible enough to allow authorized individuals to access it from anywhere AND 100% tamper, reverse engineering and intrusion-proof.

Your data is your greatest asset so, naturally, the very first step to take is a cautionary one – how secure is this BI solution? Does it provide several layers of role-based access management protocols? Does it integrate with Windows Active Directory to allow you to terminate immediately access when an employee leaves your organization? Does it restrict report parameters, encrypt the report output, require authentication before report access, and apply an expiration date? It should also include a comprehensive audit system that tracks and records every user and system action.

2. Ensure Data Integrity



Equally important and a key component of your data's security is its integrity and compliance with industry standards.

The solution must ensure data integrity and compliance. One minor user error, inability to manage access, or missed regulatory input and you can easily end up paying the cost on multiple levels.

With this in mind, your BI solution must be highly configurable to fit your business compliance standards such as HIPAA, FERPA, and SOX as well as the compliance needs of your infrastructure. Find out if the solution can archive report data with the exact runtime it is generated by the system, user or administrator. Investigate its disaster recovery options to ensure the system will recover from major failures and data loss. Finally, request a detailed analysis of the solution's scalability functions – can it accommodate your organization's traffic and load balancing needs?

3. Seamless Data Sources

Your data source is irrelevant - the solution must analyze/report on data from multiple sources.

Like most organizations, you've probably accumulated a multitude of applications across your various lines of business. To avoid the expensive pitfalls of inconsistent and missing data, ensure your chosen BI solution can communicate seamlessly across all your systems and will allow you to make 'on the fly' changes that accommodate your guidelines and needs.

Most BI and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems offer reporting functionality, but the reports are limited to the data housed within that particular system. Also, the majority of these systems were not designed to interface easily with separate applications, flexibly adapt to individual workflows or provide cross-functional report distribution.



4. Insightful & Flexible



Deliver value to the right people in the right place at the right time.

As your organization expands, so does the pressure to deliver cross-functional information to validate critical strategic decisions. You can have a BI solution with the most elaborate reporting features on the market, but if it requires you to build and configure specific distribution

lists and manually add them to a server, then you're losing time, money and weakening the security and integrity of your data.

The solution must have the ability to rapidly and flexibly distribute insights to the primary stakeholders in a personalized way. It should function as a centralized distribution hub, operating in a wide variety of environments including dedicated servers, virtual machines, and the cloud. It should support different protocols and formats and provide a seamless user experience - delivering the information based on the end user's preference.

The bottom line is a closed system is a closed system. Eventually, the costs of operating in silos will far outweigh the investment in a flexible solution that can deliver meaningful information at the precise moment it is needed without causing a disruption in your internal processes.

5. Easy To Use

The solution should be quick to deploy and easy to use for the company and its customers.

A sophisticated BI solution doesn't have to mean a cumbersome deployment or a headache to its users. In fact, once a server with basic pre-requisites is in place, it should only require a few minutes to install and configure. Multi-server deployments, a combination of database/client configurations, failover, and other setups, should be options - not requirements.

From an end-user standpoint, the features and functions of the solution should be obvious and easily customizable to fit an individual's workflow. Remember, you want your executives and staff to embrace your BI solution. With proper training, even the most non-technical users should be able to deploy, manage, schedule and view reports quickly. This empowers users and removes the barriers typically encountered with the rollout of a new solution.



6. Enhances Existing Systems



The solution should take what you have, and makes it what you need – it must be designed to leverage your existing IT investments and resources.

Ask whether the solution has a fully integrated web service and API framework that will allow you to combine the BI functionality with your existing applications and systems.

Most organizations have heavily invested in core systems that have stretched their budget and IT resources. Still, the demands of new customer SLAs and 'on the fly' KPI reports continue to increase. Instead of completely

changing your existing BI infrastructure or practices, your BI solution should be able to adapt quickly to your business environment. For example, it should have the ability to leverage your existing servers and hardware and not require dedicated staff to implement and manage it.

Ideally, the solution provider will offer comprehensive installation services enabling you to implement a complete BI infrastructure without taxing your existing human resources. It should also use industry standards (e.g. connecting to ODBC compliant databases) and APIs rather than relying on proprietary languages and technology. Avoid reinventing the wheel when there's no need for complex configurations and setup.

7. Scales With Your Company

The solution should meet you where you are and anticipate where you're going - it must scale as your business evolves without breaking the bank.

There are risks associated with any technology investment and, many times, there are transactional fees buried deep in the fine print. It's critical to ensure your BI solution can scale as your business changes and not cost you a fortune. Make sure the pricing is value-based instead of transactional-based. As your reporting volume increases, the incremental cost of adding a report to the system should go down in comparison to the price. The more you leverage the solution, the more you should save, not spend.

Ask if there's an onsite proof of concept (POC) program where you can use the solution with your live data and reports. Determine your pre-POC baseline metrics and then track the time savings associated with automated versus manual report distribution. The right solution



should be able to deliver measurable value in 30 days or less. Make it a requirement that you should be able to immediately go-live using this POC system if it meets your approval.

8. Loyal & Dependable



Choose a partner that's in it for the long haul - the BI solution provider must have a track record of customer loyalty and a team to back you up.

Investment in a vendor's technology is an investment in the vendor. Find out what drives the provider. Is it customer satisfaction or closing the next deal? Who was the vendor's first customer? Are they still a customer? Why or why not? Do they have full-time resources dedicated to account management, customer experience and consulting? Ask if there's a specific revenue number a customer has to hit before they are assigned an account manager.

In the event of a system issue, ensure you will receive top tier support as soon as you contact the provider. Enquire about their support staff's level of system knowledge and whether chat by video is an option.

Last - but not least - find out about the ongoing support model. Do they deploy customer-specific patches, scheduled software updates and version upgrades? If so, how will you be notified?

Summary



We live in an increasingly data-driven world, and all businesses need to apply an optimal BI strategy to secure their future in this climate.

Whether you are taking a first step toward implementing a BI infrastructure or currently have one in place, getting the most out of your data is essential to your success. Remember to get everyone onboard by educating about the critical role data plays in your business, get your data flowing from every corner of your business and then get automating - arm your employees and customers with insights at the right place and time.

About IntelliFront BI™



With ChristianSteven's IntelliFront BI™, you can eliminate administrative bottlenecks with self-service business intelligence. Sophisticated yet simple, our IntelliFront BI™ is flexible, scalable, and database-agnostic, enabling you to connect to multiple data sources across your enterprise and centrally manage all of your report distribution.

During implementation - typically completed in 1 day or less - we work with you to easily configure the system to mirror the workflows in your environment. Once operational, the solution can talk to any database or system. IntelliFront BI™ works behind the scenes to ensure your data is accurate, secure and delivered on time with the same look and feel - regardless of native application.

For individuals who need immediate access to information from laptops & mobile devices, IntelliFront BI™ offers an easy-to-use gallery that allows users to log in, create and run reports, view & modify dashboards on the fly and respond to real-time KPI cards with rich, interactive drill-downs and insights. Depending on your organizational needs, our solution can be used as your complete BI infrastructure or to complement your existing investments.

We're experts in helping organizations automate and deliver Business Intelligence processes so that actionable information is delivered at the precise moment it's needed. Rather than spending time and resources exporting BI reports, updating BI databases and executing manual BI processes, let ChristianSteven handle it for you.

Contact us
today for a
complimentary
BI assessment.

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