

Power BI – leading business focused self-service analytics



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Over the past few years the business intelligence space has undergone a fairly radical change. Where traditionally the business analytics applications have dominated corporate reporting, a rise in user-based applications has changed the balance. As a result we are seeing a shift from IT-led enterprise reporting to business-led self-service analytics.

One such example is Microsoft's Power BI, the business intelligence platform that allows non-technical users to share, collate, analyse and visualise data. It is recognised as one of the leading business intelligence (BI) platforms, with over 200,000 customers and one million members. This footprint provides a global reach supported by multiple data-centres around the world that deploys Power BI in over 40 languages.

The rise in self-service analytics is helped by an easy-to-use approach; for Power BI it is a natural choice for companies turning over \$10-\$50m; but it is not limited to this section of the market. 97% of the Fortune 500 companies use Power BI and users include: Deutsche Post, Hon Hai Precision, the United States Postal Service and Fiat Chrysler.

The United States has led the way in the move away from traditional business intelligence applications and Power BI's presence reflects this. Over half of its customers are based in the US, although the UK is growing as a market, being the second largest user base with just under 10% of customers.



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User-led analytics

The uptake of Power BI has no doubt been fuelled by its similarity to the other Microsoft Office applications. The familiarity of the user interface means users can intuitively start developing and creating dashboards and visualisations.

As the number of pools of information available to companies continues to grow, the ability of Power BI to connect multiple data sources (whether from stand-alone spreadsheets, on premise and in the cloud) creates a virtual network of data. Users are able to tap into disparate data centres and create branded dashboards and reports that reflect the corporate look and feel as they share company data.

By simplifying the data interrogation, transformation, integration and enrichment, users can easily create reports from custom-made or built-in visuals. The result is the organisation has

instant reporting, tailored to specific requirements rather than relying on reusing reports. By using bespoke reports to collect and analyse trends and scenarios it means teams are able to make better informed decisions.

The ability to collaborate, publish, and share information across the organisation means that the business is able to perform far more effectively; and Power BI's ability to integrate with tools such as Microsoft Excel means it fits into the team's existing ways of working quickly and seamlessly. Users are able to edit and create dashboards for analysis as they work, and companies can customise the analytics menu with convenient actions to improve user efficiency further.

User-led analytics

Part of the attraction of Power BI is the range of usability which goes from basic reporting through to advanced analytics, making it a natural solution for organisations with differing BA skillsets. The embedded APIs, SDKs and wizards allow users to prepare the development environment and deploy analytics into the application.

To ensure users have access to the data they require single and multi-tenant deployments are used; in addition, user access is managed by administrators so users only see the relevant data. In a similar fashion, administrators manage the identity and authentication of users to keep information secure.



Generating Revenues

“As well as facilitating decision making, companies are turning to Power BI to help with revenue generation. Its simple approach eliminates the need to investing time and expense in building and maintaining analytics, allowing organisations to embed interactive reports and dashboards into applications as way of differentiating from the competition.

The result for these businesses are faster routes to market, differentiated product offerings, greater customer engagement and development of new revenue streams.

Microsoft Power BI has continually invested in the analytic abilities of Power BI, it has been named by Gartner as the leader in the Analytics and Business Intelligence Platforms for the past 13

years. Its collection of software services, apps, and connectors that interact to turn multiple data sources into single coherent, visual insights means it helps organisations with decision making.



How teams are using Power BI

For business executives, finance functions and major project teams, Power BI provides a visually intuitive reporting tool. By allowing users to create dashboards and reports using both internal and external data feeds, it allows users to create greater insight into trends, scenarios and forecasts.

Major project teams have the benefit of interactive reporting, which means that all data is seen on just one screen and changes are automatically updated. This means that the project status remains live, giving a true picture at any given time.

The financial overview functionality provides the finance department with a full picture instantly. Financial data is extracted from different data sources and displayed in a single view, allowing teams to assess financial trends, status and anomalies. While the user-friendly mobility of

Power BI means business executives who are accessing data on the move or from different locations can still drill-down to the underlying data to view at a granular level.

Move away from traditional business analytics

Many companies still see a role for traditional business analytic applications, such as Oracle, however the rise of easy-to-use applications such as Power BI is changing business' approach to reporting. By providing the power and tools to users to create and develop the dashboards and reports they require for their day-to-day role, it means companies can produce dashboards and visualisations far quicker. The result is improved data-based decision making that helps the company to become more agile.

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