Business Intelligence Goes Mobile

A Success Story in Business Intelligence Delivery

With the recent influx of sophisticated smart phones and tablet computers, business intelligence is going mobile. Executives and information consumers are realizing that the same information can be analyzed and dissected on the go from a smart phone or a tablet device just as easily and effectively as it can be from a desktop computer or laptop in their office. The added benefit of consuming mobile business intelligence is that informed decisions can be made in the field in real time, instead of being delayed until a later date.

According to Gartner, tablet computer sales are expected to increase 181% in 2011 as compared to sales in 2010 . While many of these sales will be for

personal use, the inclusion of the tablet into the corporate world cannot be ignored. Furthermore, Gartner states that by 2013, 33% of business intelligence functionality will be consumed via handheld devices.[2]

Forrester predicts that within 3-5 years mobile devices will be used more frequently than the traditional laptop to run BI applications. Clearly the mobile craze is not a passing fad, but a movement that will have tremendous impacts on both the business world and on the way that business

People matter, results count.

intelligence solutions are delivered. With less than one-third of companies having already implemented a mobile solution, the market for mobility is set to skyrocket in 2011 and beyond.[3]

BI vendors are not blind to this trend and are working tirelessly to build or improve their mobile offerings. SAP BusinessObjects and MicroStrategy are just two examples of vendors that have added a mobile reporting solution to complement their existing enterprise reporting platform. Roambi, a mobile reporting start-up, has taken a different approach offering a mobile reporting solution that can read the data in your existing BI reports. All three companies require an application to be installed on the user's device much like any other application purchased through an application store.

Real-World Case Study: Mobile BI Delivery in Action

In 2010, Capgemini was engaged to build the first BusinessObjects mobile reporting solution for a major consumer products company in North America. The top fifty executives and vice-presidents in the company were seeking a way to gain immediate access to unit sales volume data. The executives were already receiving these reports on a weekly basis, delivered via Microsoft Excel. Due to the design of the report and the limitations in Excel, it was very difficult and cumbersome to view these critical metrics on the go.

In collaboration with the business users, Capgemini delivered four mobile-enabled reports to provide the users the information they needed on demand. The solution provided tremendous benefits to the users, including:
- Increased speed of delivery of actionable business information
- Enhanced business decisions by providing the decision makers with the data they needed to make informed decisions
- A more engaging, interactive, and actionable user experience

The solution has created a tremendous buzz around mobile reporting within this consumer products company, leading to additional projects across other business units. Furthermore, this company is putting extra focus and effort on mobile reporting as a part of every business intelligence project. Mobile BI is clearly becoming a business priority throughout this organization and other Fortune 500 companies.

Lessons Learned: People

In delivering this solution and collaborating with the client, a number of lessons were learned about BusinessObjects Mobile as well as how best to deliver a mobile BI solution. First and foremost, it is imperative to select your first project wisely. Mobile BI is a relatively new capability and typically requires infrastructure setup costs. As such, it is critical to deliver a win that clearly demonstrates business value during your first project. A quick win can help gain traction for mobile BI and open doors for future initiatives down the road. The ideal user community for a first mobile BI project is the executive-level employees in a given organization for two major reasons:
- When your executive-level employees see the benefits and usefulness of mobile BI solutions, it will make business case justification easier for future mobile BI rollouts.
- When your executive-level employees find value in mobile BI, his/her direct reports are likely to follow suit. By gaining executive buy-in, it will be much easier to show an organization just how beneficial it can be to consume information on the go.

While selecting your first project is critical, it is just as important to know that user community and to understand their past experience with BI as well as mobile solutions. Because many people have not used mobile BI yet, an iterative design methodology can help introduce the technology and ultimately lead to a design that

[1] Whitney, Lance. "Gartner: Global tablet sales to hit 19.5 million this year". CNET reviews (2010).
[2] Gassman, Bill. "Predicts 2011: New Relationships Will Change BI and Analytics". Gartner Research (2010).
[3] Evelson, Boris. "A Practical How-To Approach to Mobile BI". Forrester Research, Inc (2011)

will be well received by the users. At this consumer products company, Capgemini did just that. The users had not previously been exposed to mobile BI solutions and were very unsure of the capabilities that were available to them. Many were only recently issued a tablet device. Instead of spending weeks working on a design that we found valuable, we immediately met with the users and showed them three different options of how we could present the information. We hosted a workshop where we could show our initial designs and the users could provide feedback that would drive our design going forward. This approach allowed the users to be active participants in the design process and fostered a sense of ownership of the solution.

Lastly, we recommend beginning with a pilot audience that is representative of the entire population of mobile BI users. Again, since this technology was new, we wanted to identify possible problems and issues before rolling out to a wider audience. The pilot audience was also able to provide initial feedback on the reports so we were able to make small changes to enhance the reports before they were released to the top executives.

Lessons Learned: Process
First, it is important to treat mobile BI projects as innovation projects. At this consumer products company, all parties involved set expectations that this was a pilot project and treated the initiative as a project that we could all learn from. Since this was the first rollout of BusinessObjects Mobile at this company, we all knew we would encounter issues that we had never experienced before. By setting this expectation at the forefront of the project, we were better prepared to deal with and respond to issues and problems as they arose.

Secondly, it was extremely helpful to mobile-enable an existing reporting solution where we could take advantage of the people and processes already in place to help deliver the new mobile solution. This allowed our development team to focus on the mobile aspects of the solution without having to worry about other organizational issues that often arise with new BI rollouts.

Lessons Learned: Technology
On the technical side, there are numerous considerations to always be mindful of as you develop a mobile solution. The major considerations that we identified are:
- Know your client, the devices they are using, and the devices they plan to rollout in the future.
- Be mindful of device compatibility. This includes different devices (iPhone, Blackberry, Android, etc) as well as different operating system versions on a given device.
- Screen size and device will be a constraint. Always test with the same device that the users will have.
- Mobile BI is new to most environments so future iterations are always a possibility as more users get the solution in their hands.

Conclusion & Next Steps
With smart phones and tablet computers quickly taking the market by storm, now is the time to evaluate how mobile BI can drive new levels of productivity for your executives and employees in the field. Capgemini is at the forefront of mobile BI with a global customer base of clients who are on the forefront of leveraging mobile BI technology to stay ahead of the competition.

For more information, contact Capgemini and learn how we can help your organization take advantage of information on the go.

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