

Embedding Business Intelligence and Reporting capabilities

Simon West at DataPA explains why Software Application Vendors are now opting commercially to embed Business Intelligence and Reporting capabilities



Your application

Your company has created a great product. Your developers have built a unique application that is best in class. How much time has been spent on the business intelligence (BI) and reporting layer that is used to expose your application?

For many ISV's business intelligence and reporting is an afterthought, just a check box on the roadmap. For many of the people that purchase and use your system, business intelligence and reporting plays a significant role in their overall satisfaction.

- > Can your customers personalise the out-of-box reports to match their corporate brand?
- > Can your customers customise the reports?
- > Do your reports support all of the languages and currencies where you sell your product?
- > Do your reports integrate with your core application or are they an add-on?
- > Can your sales people use the reports that ship with your product to differentiate from your competitors?

DataPA works with Independent Software Vendors (ISVs) to build business intelligence and reporting solutions that become a feature of the sales cycle. Rather than providing a check box, the business intelligence and reporting solution becomes a key differentiator.

Embedding Business Intelligence (BI) and Reporting for Profit

The business benefits for ISVs who embed BI are that they can profit from the growth of the BI market, reduce customer BI integration risks, deliver more value added software and associated services, and offer pre-built customised BI solutions. These are the 'hard edged' business benefits. Many of the softer business benefits are also valued by ISV partners. These include high responsiveness to ISV needs, including specific capabilities for additional, industry-specific functionality and the ability to build trust in their business relationships.

Why ISVs Embed Business Intelligence in their Software Applications

Software application vendors are now more than ever integrating BI into their software – for a number of compelling business reasons. These are discussed below;

> ISV partners exploit the growth Business Intelligence market opportunity

There is a massive global market opportunity for BI software. Market commentators agree that only 25% of staff in larger organizations use BI today. These are the "power users," i.e. the business analysts and financial managers that use BI to identify root causes of business non-performance. Market commentators also agree that 85% of staff should have some access to BI functionality. This is often called 'pervasive BI'. The key question is "how are all these staff going to gain access to BI software?" Does this mean that organisations will need to buy more dedicated BI licenses?

Some will, but many want BI functionality within the context of their business applications software, be it HR, financial, ERP, CRM software, and so on. BI functionality should provide "pop up" availability at "Martini Time"; the right place, at the right time, using the right data. It should not open onto a blank screen (such as one does with Word or Excel), to build an application from scratch. Customers want embedded BI within their business applications software.

Not all users are necessarily analytical by nature, but virtually all of them may need access to BI software – at least occasionally – to answer a question from a manager or look at some business aspect in detail. Typically a "power user" will assist. Users will not learn a new software package in order to answer a one-off exceptional item. This is where the concept of pervasive BI really comes into its own. If all applications software has BI, then BI will truly be pervasive. It doesn't mean that we will all use BI software all of the time, it means we can access BI on demand, when and where we need BI capabilities.

By partnering with DataPA you will be able to deliver greater value to your customers and realise a greater share of their IT spend.

Why ISVs Embed Business Intelligence in their Software Applications (continued)

> ISV partners reduce customer Business Intelligence integration risk

Some organisations view pure-play BI vendors with a degree of trepidation. There is virtually always data integration and systems integration required before the “complete version of the truth” BI promise can be achieved. Most astute customers are aware that the practical challenges are many times greater than the vendors’ marketing rhetoric. The range of application programming interfaces (APIs) alone is a major challenge for implementers, as is their ongoing maintenance.

By integrating BI into applications software from the outset, ISV partners can mitigate this perceived customer risk. Applications software including BI out-of-the-box is a major attraction to customers. An ISV partner offering specialist industry sector or departmental solutions is more likely to understand the customer’s business challenges and the corresponding software solutions, rather than a generic BI technology vendor. Hence an ISV partner can provide the correct context for BI use, rather than the customer having to make assumptions and take risks to architect a solution from a generalist supplier.

> ISV partners deliver more value added software and associated services

BI makes application software more useful and valuable for customers by enabling better reporting and analysis. BI also assists the management of data quality and data integration. In addition BI enables more complex customer needs to be addressed to provide a true means of differentiation from competitors with similar applications in an ISV’s marketplace.

Today all software applications need some BI capabilities built-in for analysis and reporting of data generated by the applications. Without BI there is a risk that applications software are perceived by customers as legacy and commodity; with BI more scope exists for product differentiation, solutions selling, premium pricing, project enlargement, and the flexibility to meet customer needs more holistically.

Integrated BI assists ISVs to gain a greater share of customer IT spend, increase customer loyalty and customer retention, and ward off the competitive customer acquisition aspirations of the applications giants of the likes of SAP, Oracle, Microsoft and others. Integrated BI enables access to more projects and project extensions, resulting in OEM partners benefiting from more sales account control and more ongoing cash flow from customer accounts.

> ISVs can deliver pre-built customised Business Intelligence solutions

Many ISVs try to build their own BI solutions to meet the customers’ needs using tools such as Crystal Reports. Both product and support limitations hamper these aspirations. The requirement is for a functionally rich solution, which is flexible and easy to deploy. ISVs want their BI vendors to play a more active role in customising interfaces and providing functionality to meet the industry-specific needs of their customers.

ISVs recognise that BI is neither core business nor a core competency, and do not really want to become a BI vendor. Speed-to-market for applications solutions vendors and speed-to-value for their customers are key performance metrics in today’s highly competitive enterprise software market. Successful ISVs recognise that these goals are only achieved by concentrating resources on what you do best, rather than spreading resources too thinly across non-core business areas such as BI software development.

By leaving your BI development to DataPA you will be able to take your applications to market faster and better than ever before, which has to have a direct positive effect on your competitiveness, sales growth and profit.

Summary

In summary, the ISV channel is set to become the preferred route to market for customers requiring more pervasive and context-driven BI functionality, rather than vendor direct sales or the reseller distribution channels of the pure-play vendors. By partnering with DataPA you will be able to deliver greater value to your customers and realise a greater share of their IT spend.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS