

Enhance Your Agility and Speed Up Your ROI with Mobile Business Intelligence

by Paul Clark, SAP

Most small and mid-sized business leaders pride themselves on being able to react more quickly to customer requirements and market trends than larger competitors. This agility is a strategic differentiator for them — and it's one they want to keep. That's why these businesses are working to increase their agility and responsiveness by using business intelligence (BI).

Of course, for a typical small-to-mid-sized enterprise (SME), the investment in a BI solution is a significant one, so having a clear and direct path to achieving returns on such an investment is a top priority. One effective way to lower the total cost of ownership (TCO) per user and speed the return on investment (ROI) is by expanding the use of BI tools across the enterprise and encouraging more widespread adoption.¹

But for SMEs, expanding the adoption of BI can be a challenge because:

- They have a smaller pool of potential users.
- They have fewer IT resources with which to extend the tools to these users.

So, how can SMEs overcome these challenges? The answer lies in mobile BI.

The Case for Mobile BI

Bringing BI to a wider user base through mobility provides quantifiable business benefits both internally and externally, while lowering TCO per user and increasing ROI. For starters, decisions are made much more quickly. According to

Aberdeen Group, “Managers in organizations that use mobile BI are able to make decisions in almost one-third of the time that it takes managers who don't use mobile BI.”² This allows SMEs to further enhance and capitalize on their agility. Providing decision makers with anytime, anywhere access to useful information allows them to make informed operational decisions even while traveling or in the lull between meetings, without having to get to a networked PC to log onto the BI system.

And once mobile BI is deployed, a culture of immediacy begins to grow within the company, providing businesses using mobile BI another leg up on their competition. In fact, Aberdeen found that mobile BI users are almost twice as likely to expect a rapid response to their information requests than non-mobile BI users.

Because of its design and form factor, mobile BI requires relatively little end-user training. Reports and views are typically reformatted on the fly for the mobile device, which is particularly useful to SMEs because their companies may not have the resources required to build new reports for mobile users. In addition, mobile apps make it easy for end users to ask and answer questions from the data so that IT doesn't have to create a different report for every business issue.

Besides the internal efficiencies, mobile BI can also increase customer satisfaction by 13%, according to Aberdeen, by enabling field sales and service workers to answer customer questions and requests immediately (for reference, a



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¹ Aberdeen Group, “Managing the TCO of BI: The Path to ROI is Paved with Adoption” (May 2012).

² Aberdeen Group, “Mobile BI 2012: Accelerating Business on the Move” (March 2012).

non-mobile BI user's average customer satisfaction improvement is around 7%). For business leaders at SMEs, that improvement in responsiveness can be a competitive differentiator in their efforts to win new customers.

The SME's Path to Mobile BI

With a clear business case in hand, the next step is to figure out how to get from on-premise to mobile BI quickly and easily. For existing SAP customers using an analytics application, that path is not complicated. In fact, it has become even clearer this year with the release of a new

solution set designed specifically with these users in mind.

For those companies that already have an SAP analytics system in place and want to dip their toe in the waters of mobile BI, the SAP BusinessObjects Explorer app is available for free download in the Apple app store. Any individual can download the app and test it for free — in fact, more than 300,000 users have already done just that. It is then a simple task for the IT organization to switch on the mobile capabilities within the existing BI platform to connect with the app.

For small companies using SAP Crystal solutions that are looking for a more formal mobile BI environment, SAP Crystal Server provides an entry-level mobile BI solution (see **Figure 1**). This mobile add-on solution enables data exploration through its easy search capability and displays data on interactive dashboards with touchscreen navigation and native iOS visualizations. Users can access key performance indicators (KPIs) and vital customer-centric data from documents created in SAP Crystal Reports to help answer customer questions in the field and improve customer services. And companies can be sure the data is secure because it is coming from an SAP system.

For midsized SAP customers that want to deploy mobile BI, SAP recently released a new version of SAP BusinessObjects BI, Edge edition (refer again to Figure 1). Designed specifically for users at midsized enterprises, this edition provides real-time business insights with ad hoc reporting and data visualization, but can still be deployed in as little as six days. SAP BusinessObjects BI, Edge edition can integrate data from various sources, helping overcome one of the common challenges that midsized companies face more than small companies.

FIGURE 1 ▼ Smaller companies can start with SAP Crystal Server and graduate to SAP BusinessObjects BI, Edge edition when they need additional functionality in their mobile BI installations

	SAP Crystal Server	SAP BusinessObjects BI, Edge edition
Data exploration	X	X
Interactive dashboards	X	X
Enterprise reports	X	X
Secure delivery	X	X
Ad hoc analysis		X
OLAP analysis		X
Java and .NET APIs	X	
Access to any enterprise data		X
Data integration		X
Data quality management		X
SAP Rapid Marts		X

Mobilizing BI: The Partner Ecosystem's Role

Customers looking to take advantage of the SAP solutions for mobilizing BI can depend on SAP's partner ecosystem for help. For example, buying one of these solutions from an SAP-certified partner or authorized reseller means that the solution is coming from a tried and tested source that has undergone SAP's evaluations. Our partners also offer implementation services that give SMEs access to expert consultants, many of whom have already worked closely with a number of other SME customers. These partners understand an SME's business goals and industry intimately and can ensure that the implementation meets their needs.

Taking Hold

With a clear set of drivers and new solutions specifically designed for SME users, the adoption of mobile BI solutions at SMEs has taken off in the past year. Small and midsized enterprises are expanding their BI environments through mobility and speeding their path to ROI, while also improving customer service and enabling faster, better-informed decision making.

If your company is waiting for the right time to take your BI systems mobile, that time is now. ■