The Problem With BI Tool Implementations

Late night ramblings from Chuck Hooper - September 16, 2012
web:www.bialytics.com

First problem - there are no BI tools!
A better title for this might have been "**The Problem With "so called BI Tool" Implementations**".
All those we call "BI Tools" are really nothing more than aids to analyzing, formatting and disseminating information. The REAL intelligence comes from people, and nowhere else! So, the goal needs to be to get bright people, the right tool(s), the right data, and, to support them!

What are the problems with many BI tool implementations?

1. **Unrealistic expectations**! No one tool does it all - in some situations, you may need to consider more than one of these tools. That's OK! NONE are "magical". ALL require some level of work to implement. **The goal is to pick the tool that minimizes the implementation process.**

2. **Long learning curve / too complex**. Both lead to delayed productivity, and, low adoption! The low adoption can be a killer. Potentially good analysts might be left behind. Pick the tool that has the easiest start up learning curve. It is, likely, you'll never "master" any tool. **So, work to get productive, sooner!**

3. *High implementation cost*. Talk is cheap. Action can be expensive. **NO action can be REALLY expensive!** There's a question used by application designers: "*Do you want that quick, cheap, or good? Pick any 2 of the 3*". If you want it cheap, it is either not going to be good, or, won't be done quickly. Part of the cost is the learning curve in the use of the tool; part is based on the adoption rate. Do NOT confuse price and cost. Faster implementations tend to be cheaper and have greater ROI! *Hmmmmmm, MAYBE we can pick all three!*

4. **Too many options!** There are a lot of so called "BI tools" available. Be careful of doing your "due diligence". That's what I call a practice initiated by people that don't know what to do, and, won't trust those that do! Your problem is not unique – most likely it has been solved, before. **Do not reinvent the wheel. If we were not all in the same boat, Dilbert would not be so popular!**

5. **Keeping it simple**! It's easy to get hung up on complex processes that can lead to extended and expensive implementations. Work hard to keep your efforts simple! Even then, it is likely your end results will be overly complex! Beware of tools requiring a bunch of third party add-ons, or too many individual pieces be installed. **Simplicity succeeds. Complexity fails. Believe it. Live it.**

6. **Lack of actionability**. Many BI implementations have pretty dashboards and scorecards – lots of flash & pizazz. **If your outputs are not actionable, you've wasted your efforts.** This is not an issue with the tool(s) – lack of actionable insights is bad planning, design and implementation. Too often, it's the tool that is blamed (Probably because it can't fight back!). So, be prepared to take ownership of your successes, AND, of your failures. **Fix the failures. Rejoice in the successes. Move on.**

7. **"Get it done and we can rest" mentality**. You are NEVER done. A successful BI environment is one where all aspects of it are fluid / iterative. Think of your competition as a 10 foot long crocodile. You stop fighting AFTER he's stopped fighting!

Back in the mid-20th century, Aristotle Onassis said "The secret of business is in knowing what no one else knows.". That was OK, 60-70 years ago. We call this the "information age" for a reason. It's likely you don't know more than your competition. There's a new secret, today. "**Take what you know and do more with it, sooner, faster, cheaper**.".

- **More**: Pure people smarts, nothing else.
- **Sooner**: A decision – are you going to start that BI project now? Or, wait until the competition eats your lunch?
- **Faster**: This is NOT "fastest response" times. It is "faster to insight".
- **Cheaper**: This is not the price of the tool or the infrastructure. It is the total cost of ownership, including training, support, training, support, training, support etc. And, do not forget training and support.

To be successful… I believe it was **Christopher McDougall** that said: "Every day, in Africa, a gazelle wakes up, knowing he must run faster than the fastest lion, or, he will be eaten. Every day, in Africa, a lion wakes up, knowing he must run faster than the slowest gazelle, or, he will starve. It matters not, whether you are the lion or the gazelle. When the sun comes up, you'd better be running.".

Is YOUR competition already up and running?

Chuck Hooper is a business intelligence and data visualization consultant, specializing in healthcare and education clients. Chuck brings 47 years of business and IT experience with him. In addition to the current consulting offerings, Chuck does speaking engagements, and, conducts training sessions on the use of Tableau Software products, visual analytics, data warehouse design, and other business intelligence topics, at both the technical and the executive levels.
Ask me what tool(s) I prefer and what Business Intelligence implementation processes I like to follow!
For further information: email: chooper@bialytics.com Twitter:@chuck_hooper web:www.bialytics.com