



Better Business Reporting – Leverage the Power of ERP Systems

The selection and implementation of Enterprise Systems have always had two key drivers – Managing Business Processes and Enhanced Reporting. While most technology functionaries use elaborate planning and decision cycles to select the most appropriate package to manage business processes, the reporting component often ends up taking a back seat.

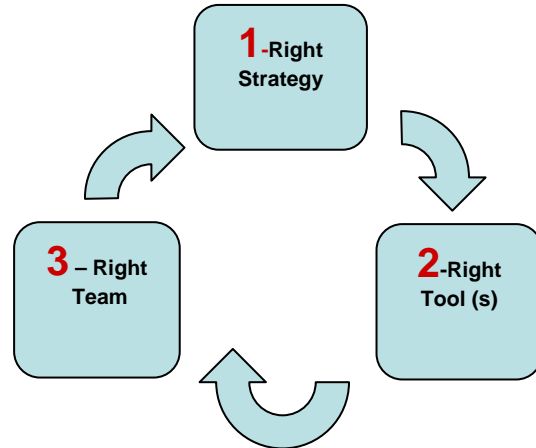
Most business executives still express disappointment about the business systems in place – not because they do not efficiently support the business processes they are designed for, but because they do not cater to 3 essentials of reporting – Accuracy, Timeliness and Presentation. Executives often express that existing reporting is not what they need, arrives to them too late to take meaningful action, and is not presented in the most useful way for their needs. Add to this the variety of report formats (Excel or PDF), and many executives find themselves or their staff manually manipulating large quantities of data to provide meaningful reports on a regular basis.

Executives have expressed a need for two types of reporting. One for regular consistent reporting that changes infrequently. These include standard financial, HR and CRM reports. The second is for reporting that is highly dynamic, changing from day to day, moment to moment.

Datamarts and Business Intelligence tools help ease some of the technical challenges, but to what extent? Most businesses executives agree that datamarts need to be built around processes not applications. If the need is to report on a CRM function, it would be helpful to aggregate all relevant data leveraging a key CRM database that supports most processes. The same is true for Human Resource, Finance and Supply Chain reporting.

Large integrated systems are not critical to such a reporting definition, but it is critical that the reporting solution leverage the application/process knowledge of these enterprise resources, either internal or external. A large integrated system implementation helps to the extent that the knowledge pool is aggregated within a more manageable and focused set of specialists.

Here are a few key things that you should keep in mind when deciding your reporting strategy



1. Choose the Right Reporting and Data Aggregation Strategy

- a. Determine your overall reporting needs. Collect a set of sample reports that you have created over time that continue to be useful. Break these into two categories, static and dynamic
- b. Determine if an aggregation strategy is really required? Can an existing application database be customized to store additional key data elements? There are pro's and cons to this approach - A flatter hierarchy helps in processing queries faster but also creates batch overheads .
- c. Aggregate data around processes, not applications. It helps if the organization is aligned towards processes. If not, it would help to define a Project Organization represented by Cross-Business Leads who can help define the most appropriate data aggregation

2. Choose the Right Reporting Product

This is a tricky question and there are few one-size-fits-all products. Most enterprise systems



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bundle third-party reporting products as part of the package (For example, SQR and Crystal in PeopleSoft). Many times a one-size-fits-all strategy may not work and it will become necessary to select two distinct types of reporting tools

- a. One that would allow a limited set of super users to quickly develop on the fly ad-hoc reports for critical decision making,
- b. Another for the more voluminous / more frequent and data intensive operational reports.

3. Choose the Right Team to implement the reporting strategy

This, of course is the most critical part of the decision cycle – How the team is structured determines what gets delivered. Of course, a critical part of the decision is whether to

- a. Wholly Insource
- b. Hire External Consultants individually or
- c. Work with a Full Solution provider.

If your organization chooses to go with a Full Solution provider, choose one that offers both Enterprise Systems and Business Intelligence expertise. If more than 1 ERP package manages your internal processes, choose a vendor with identified skills in each of those packages. Whichever approach you follow, we recommend that the reporting team be led by the enterprise specialists (i.e.) those with knowledge of the processes and the underlying database schema combined with an internal lead resource who understands the overall reporting and aggregation strategy.

About Cognizant:

Headquartered in New Jersey, with more than 30,000 employees worldwide, Cognizant is a global leader in IT services and pioneered the pace setting 4th generation IT services model. Cognizant has senior executives – such as client partners, practice heads and program managers – based close to our clients in the US and Europe who are tightly integrated with our robust SEI CMMI Level V offshore capability, rated as one of the top 4, by a leading analyst firm. Additionally, we constantly become more

customer-centric by creating new ways to deliver bottom-line benefits to our customers. We measure our contributions through increased customer satisfaction, client retention rates and value delivered.

Cognizant's ERP practice is mature and fast growing. Having implemented ERP systems across a wide range of vertical industry sectors, we have developed core competencies with the leading ERP applications, including SAP, PeopleSoft, JD Edwards and Oracle. Furthermore, with our experience in related application areas, ranging from CRM to business intelligence, supply chain management, and e-business, we can help your organization derive maximum value from your ERP projects.

To find out about how Cognizant can help improve your enterprise reporting, please mail us at inquiry@cognizant.com