



eBook

Out of the Box: Business Intelligence, No Assembly Required

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Introduction

The enterprise space is awash with BI solutions that require enormous resources to acquire, deploy, evaluate, train, and maintain. Many of these are backed by industry titans such as IBM, Oracle, SAP, and Microsoft.

Furthermore, most cost a small fortune and require a highly specialized IT army to install and manage. Newer entrants to the BI arena, such as Tableau and Domo, are a step in the right direction but remain costly, with extensive feature sets that are beyond the needs, scope and comprehension of most business users.

Depending on the platform, deployment can be difficult, but in either case adoption is likely to be uneven. Once deployed, IT and financial leadership are anxious to extract the most value from their investment. A CIO at a mid-sized manufacturer once admitted that his team “developed a bunch of dashboards and emailed out links to them along with training videos.” Problem solved, right?

Maybe in a parallel universe in which product learning curves are mysteriously flat and IT support has gone the way of the rotary phone. In the meantime, business users will continue to seek out solutions that give them what they want, which, by the way, does not include a user manual.

In a perfect world, business users can get what they need through familiar, existing tools. They should not be required to sift through reams of obscurely named schemas, tables and fields, nor should they be able to peek around corners into other users’ confidential data. Furthermore, they should not be tempted to copy and paste sensitive material into a personal email, or thumb drive so they can “work on it at home.”

Section 1 - Finding the Best Solution

What’s needed is a way to securely present relevant data to each constituent in a manner that is easy for them to consume. It must allow for document governance, so that only the right users can see the appropriate data and traceability, to assure it comes from the proper source.

For Finance, Excel is required, so they can pivot and chart to their heart’s delight. For Marketing, Sales and Operations, there is a continued need to fortify Excel, but also to evaluate KPI’s through dashboards.

Leadership needs high-level indicators – think speedometers, gauges and stop light charts – on demand, anywhere, any time and on any device. Dashboards are wildly popular at management level.

Section 2 - Comparing Software

Fortunately, there are solutions on the market that are easy to own, install, secure, manage and use.

One such solution is Looker, a recent and interesting entrant. A Gartner report on the space credits Looker as an “agile product that supports a wide range of use cases” and “above average for user enablement”.

However, the same report notes “a third of Looker's reference customers reported that ease of use for business users was a limitation to its wider deployment as “the code-based approach for authoring is less accessible to the mass market of business users than the GUI-based approaches that are driving much of the net new buying.”

Another solution is StarQuery. Developed by Symtrax from an IT perspective with business users in mind, it can organize and deliver data from legacy systems alongside intelligence from the latest cloud-based solutions. The architecture reflects how it's used: IT builds the maps that securely present the relevant data to each business unit.

Power users build and share ad hoc queries for others to use. Executives swipe right for the latest sales figures, delegate information for reporting and frequently use dashboards for strategic decision making. Those with simple needs can just click and consume the data. StarQuery can augment (or, to put it another way, replace) the fairly primitive sales dashboards available in Dynamics CRM. It plays equally well with Salesforce but the latter is integrating Einstein Data Insights, still a work in progress as of this writing.

Conclusion

In summary, if you're sporting a large budget and are looking to peel the onion six ways from Sunday, Tableau or Domo might be for you. If you're technologically fluent and have some time on your hands, it might be tempting to give Looker a try. For those seeking a simple, flexible and infinitely connectable reporting tool, StarQuery is likely the best bet.



About Symtrax

Symtrax is a worldwide software company helping organizations enhance document management processes with cloud-ready solutions in mind. Our ever-expanding range of connectors establishes compatibility easily, and our Compleo Suite software can address a wide range of challenges through its specialized modules. To learn more, [visit our site](#) or contact us at sales@symtrax.com.

About the Author

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Throughout much of his career, Mr. Fackre has concentrated on how technology helps organizations become more productive by capturing, organizing, and sharing critical knowledge, information, and expertise.

Prior to joining Symtrax, Mr. Fackre co-founded Airtime, a Mobile SaaS Solution provider, and ResearchAgent Corporation, where he pioneered a product line used to manage web content.

Upon graduating from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Mr. Fackre joined Equitrac Corporation, where he enjoyed a long and successful career in a variety of progressively responsible leadership and sales management positions.