



Cutwater™ BI (Business Intelligence): When Less Makes More Sense

The ability to analyze trends in business operations – be it a measure of sales, a strategic financial metric, or operations performance – is a basic competitive need of any management team. To support accurate and reliable data, firms of all sizes invest in transaction (ERP) systems that control how data is managed.

Providing the end-user community access to this data, however, has been a challenge for many organizations.

This whitepaper defines what we at Cutwater believe to be the most important characteristics of software to support business intelligence (BI). It also clarifies strategic choices we've made in designing our mid-market solution for business analysis and reporting, **Cutwater™ BI**.

Defining Business Intelligence

At Cutwater, we define business intelligence as

The ability to spontaneously analyze and report on business information.

This definition centers on the **end user's ability** to select, sort, and manipulate data across functions and across systems.

By end user, we refer to the line manager, sales representative, controller, and operations executives. These people run the business, interact with others outside the organization, and marry their experience with current business information to react to change.

There are two requirements we believe are critical when considering decision support software for mid-market companies. The first centers on end-user ability to serve themselves to data. Data self-service separates a true decision support tool from a basic report writer.

The second focuses on eliminating routine data requests being made to in-house IT professionals, freeing up more of their time for more valuable IT efforts.

Self-Service Access to Data

Most business professionals do not have the time to master report writers or learn complex user interfaces. Software feature overload is the single biggest reason many initiatives to support performance reporting are not successful. If the features and functions require even a moderate amount of training, odds are the tool will be abandoned.

There is no gray area here: If the product requires too much effort to use, people will not use it. If software is easy to use, more people across the organization will turn to it to deal with the challenges faced by managers every hour of every day.

Clutch Thinking

Consider the following analogy: Once people become comfortable driving a car with a manual transmission, they no longer have to think about operating the machinery, but only about where they are going.

In Cutwater terms, "clutch thinking" means that users can experiment with data while they mentally work through problems. This is only possible when users can concentrate on the insight their data provides, rather than on operating the enabling software.

This is the reason that Microsoft Excel continues to be the most widely-used decision support tool on the market. Excel promotes data exploration that allows users to focus on the problem at hand rather than on making the software function. In addition, its intuitive interface allows users to look at data in unexpected and creative ways – as they think, debate, and consider alternatives to any given problem.

Cutwater BI allows users to explore and manipulate data without the need to put mental energies into operating the software.

Supporting the IT Professional

The information technology professionals of mid-market companies are responsible for a wide variety of diverse duties, involving everything from smart phones to corporate IT security, to the dependability of the company's source transaction systems.

Unfortunately, they are also frequently burdened with mundane report and data requests that are time intensive and distract them from more valuable IT efforts.

Without a doubt, creating data marts and ensuring that reliable data is available is the job of an IT professional. At this point, however, the baton should be handed off to business managers to serve themselves to the information that has been made available to them.

Cutwater™ BI

Cutwater BI uses a straightforward interface with a narrow set of software features that allows users to combine data in rows and columns, filter content, and sort results. Data exploration is flexible and driven by ad-hoc user needs to analyze performance.

The endgame is that more people use the tool, and do so in a way that improves decision making without significant cost or effort.

Competitive Advantage is Guaranteed

Cutwater software is licensed only after an application has been up and running for two months. This means we guarantee not only that the product will work - but also that it will be a competitive advantage to your team.

By just about any standard, Cutwater BI is more affordable to license than building similar reporting capabilities in-house and can be up and running in days, not months.

Cutwater professionals know the systems and challenges involved with organizing data for reporting. We will work with you to identify data requirements, install an initial application, and make the tool available to your team.

Cutwater Appliance Model

Recognizing that many mid-market companies wish to quickly deploy a cost-effective solution without disrupting the business, Cutwater BI is also provided in a single, packaged hardware appliance that can be installed at a client company in a few hours.

The result is performance reporting software on a preconfigured hardware server with all necessary components to support an unlimited number of users.

To learn more about Cutwater BI, please visit our website or call us today.

About Cutwater

Cutwater, with offices in Pittsburgh, PA and in Wilmington, DE, has provided decision support software tools to companies in the Americas, Europe, and Asia since 2001.

Cutwater software professionals maintain the Cutwater BI application entirely from industry standard components, focusing on the needs of end users and of the IT professionals who support them.

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