

Boost The Value Of Your Enterprise BI With Advanced Search

Introduction

Business intelligence (BI) is the key enterprise capability for transforming data into information to drive better business decisions. For decades, organizations have recognized the importance of BI and analytics, and they constantly strive to put in place tools and technologies to support efficient and effective BI environments. But businesses of all sizes often struggle with implementing BI platforms and applications that are enterprise-grade (scalable and secure) yet allow knowledge workers to be effective without the help of technology professionals. Paradoxically, while many organizations claim success and maturity with their BI applications, they often contradictorily admit that they experience a range of problems.

In September 2014, ThoughtSpot commissioned Forrester Consulting to conduct research online of business and technology executives who are looking to make their BI more effective and efficient through the use of improved enterprisewide data exploration/search platforms. This study surveyed manager+ professionals in North America who have sufficient insight into the business analytics, business intelligence, and big data investments within their organizations. This research uses Forrester's own market data and a custom study of the same audience.

Traditional Enterprise BI Often Hinders Agility

The power to define how business is won has shifted into the hands of digitally empowered customers. With mobile devices, the Internet, and all-but-unlimited access to information about products, services, prices, and deals, customers are now able to: 1) understand the companies they do business with; 2) stay well-informed about companies and their products; 3) quickly find alternatives; and 4) bring peer pressure to drive change. Forrester calls this phenomenon the age of the customer. But not all enterprises have readily embraced this new cycle. One common thread runs through the profile of most of the thriving companies — they succeed to manage change. Business agility — reacting to business events just in time for fast-changing business needs — is what enables businesses to thrive amid ever-accelerating market changes and dynamics. What does the age of the customer mean in pragmatic and actionable terms to BI professionals? Forrester believes that in order to survive and succeed in the age of the customer by focusing on and prioritizing business agility, BI technology pros should embrace Agile BI concepts.

Forrester defines Agile BI as a combination of Agile software development methodologies, processes, organizational structures, and technologies. Unfortunately, while traditional, earlier generation platforms can make business intelligences scalable and ready for most mission-critical applications, they often fail at making BI agile. Conversely, so-called “shadow IT” BI desktop applications mostly based on spreadsheets can provide instant gratification to ever-changing business requirements, do not scale, are not secure, and pose significant operational risk.

This dual personality of enterprise BI is leading companies to consider new BI technologies.

Traditional BI Is No Longer Sufficient

While almost half of business and technology decision-makers, 48%, claimed that their BI environments are mature/successful, paradoxically they experience a range of problems. Forrester found inconsistency between what respondents claimed their enterprise BI applications accomplish and what they actually accomplish: Sixty-four percent have difficulty correlating questions to metrics; 50% struggle asking a question that they don't know how to

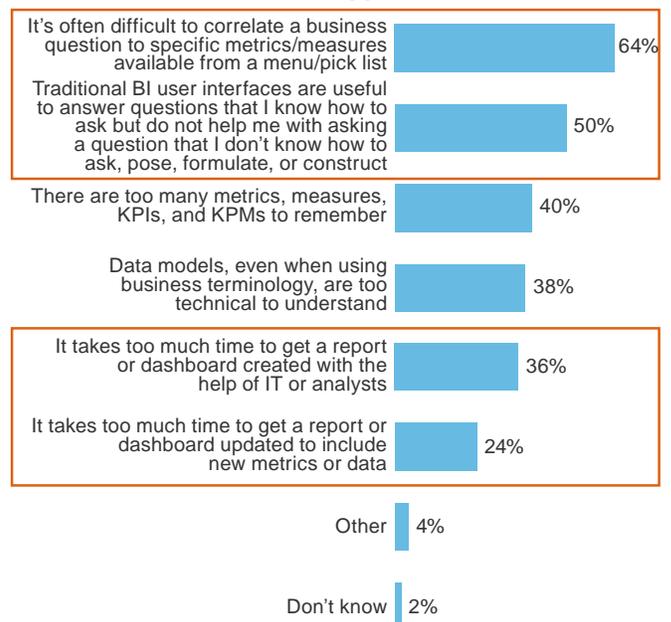
formulate; and a combined 60% reported time concerns with creating/updating dashboards (see Figure 1).

Forrester's Business Technographics research indicates that companies are also experiencing a range of business and technology challenges that drive their strategic business intelligence decisions (see Figure 2). These challenges include:

- › **Data security and privacy.** Thirty-five percent of respondents are challenged by managing the privacy and security of their data.
- › **Lack of alignment between IT and business.** Thirty-five percent of survey participants have experienced a lack of a cohesive strategy between IT and business silos.
- › **Inadequate user training.** Thirty-four percent of respondents reported lack of internal training to support wider deployment of BI tools.

FIGURE 1
Biggest Challenges With Traditional BI Platforms

“What challenges do you experience with traditional BI approaches?”



Base: 50 NA manager+ professionals who are involved in the decision-making of their enterprise business intelligence

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of ThoughtSpot, September 2014

FIGURE 2
Biggest Challenges Driving Enterprise BI Strategy



Base: 627 US business and technology decision-makers

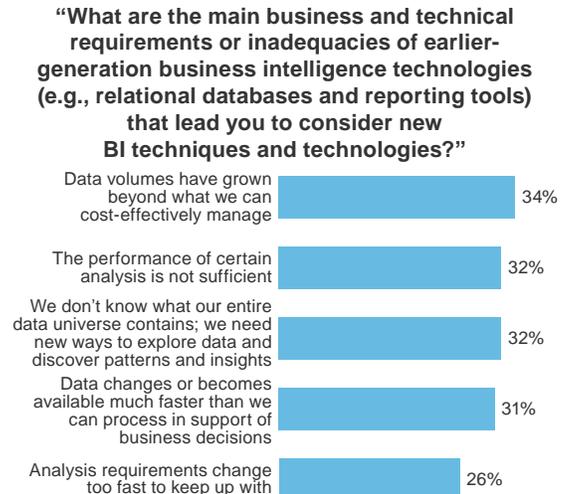
Note: Some responses are not shown.

Source: Business Technographics Global Data And Analytics Survey, 2014, Forrester Research, Inc.

Get More Out Of Your Business Data With Innovative Technologies

New requirements and limitations of traditional BI technologies lead companies to consider new BI technologies. Forrester’s Business Technographics data shows that over a third of business and technology decision-makers attribute these factors to data volume growing beyond what can be managed cost-effectively. With traditional BI, data changes or becomes available quicker than companies can process in support of business decisions, emphasizing the increased need for agility and the ability to handle data faster and more efficiently. Thirty-two percent of respondents also stated that technical requirements such as data discovery and exploration are just as important of a factor (see Figure 3). These are just some of the reasons many organizations are seeking alternative technologies.

FIGURE 3
Gaps In Earlier-Generation BI Platforms



Base: 627 US business and technology decision-makers

Note: Some are responses not shown.

Source: Business Technographics Global Data And Analytics Survey, 2014, Forrester Research, Inc.

Forrester believes that part of the solution is a more modern BI user interface that:

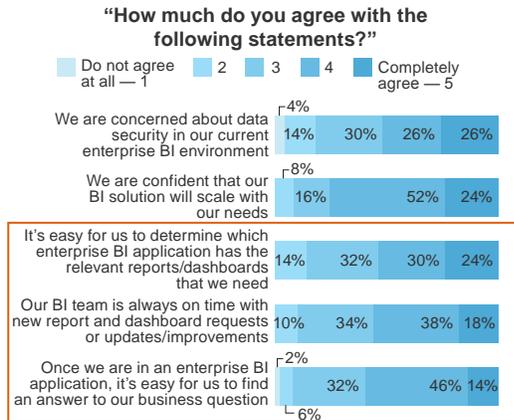
- › Can be navigated by business users with little to no IT involvement.
- › Does not require tech knowledge.
- › Allows spur-of-the-moment data exploration.
- › Provides access to all relevant enterprise data to the business users, not just their own data silo.

Such a modern, intuitive BI user interface that will make business users more self-sufficient will address multiple BI challenges. When respondents were asked how much they agree with statements about BI, Forrester found that:

- › Almost half of survey participants were neutral/did not agree that it is easy to determine which enterprise BI application has the most relevant reports and dashboards they need.
- › Forty percent indicated it's not easy for them to find an answer to a business question once they are in the BI app.

› Further, 44% of decision-makers stated that they do not agree that their BI team is always on time with new report and dashboard requests or updates (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4
Typical Enterprise BI Challenges



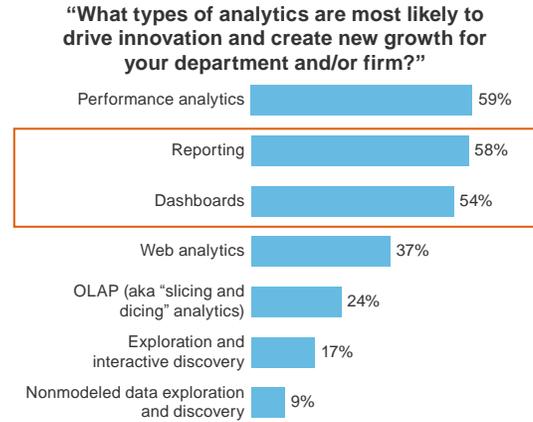
Base: 50 NA manager + professionals who are involved in the decision-making of their enterprise business intelligence
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of ThoughtSpot, September 2014

Businesses cannot afford long cycles for BI reporting, so increased data management and access need to be agile to respond to that change. To promote business agility, enterprise knowledge workers need to be empowered with enterprise BI tools that allow flexible and responsive access to BI data without having a heavy dependence on IT or a BI team. At the same time, IT needs to be able to allow and manage access to all enterprise data for business users to aid in their decision-making. Only then can Agile BI be possible at enterprise scale.

Yet, few enterprises utilize data exploration and instead rely mostly on canned reports, which are not sufficient. Analytics and reporting are only as effective as the data behind them, and with limited capabilities for searching data, businesses will miss opportunities to use BI effectively. Based on Forrester's Business Technographics data, 58% and 54% of respondents disclose that reporting and dashboards, respectively, continue to be most likely to drive innovation for their firm, while only 17% of respondents credit exploration and discovery to growth (see Figure 5). This indicates the relatively untapped market for search-based data exploration technologies to capture if they can provide

easy access to BI at enterprise scale to all users for all enterprise data.

FIGURE 5
Businesses Believe Innovation Is Driven By Analytics And Reporting

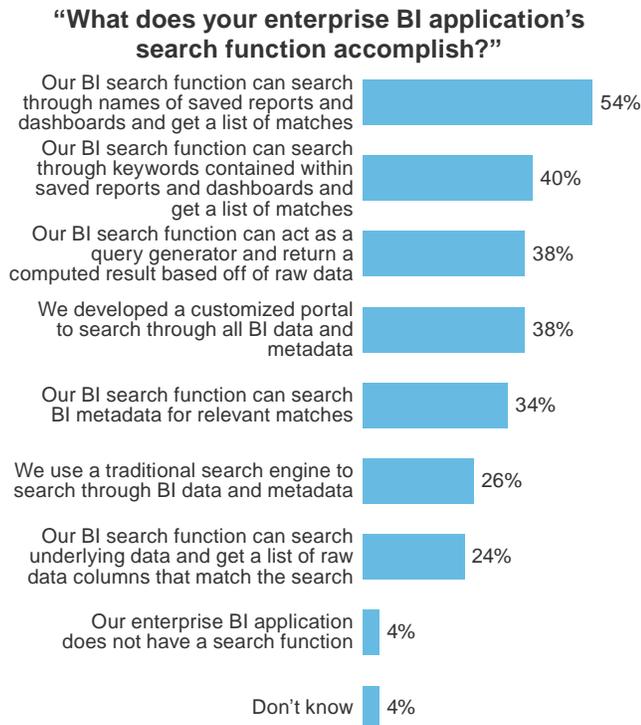


Base: 940 US business and technology decision-makers
 Note: respondents included = 38%, filter applied
 Source: Business Technographics Global Data And Analytics Survey, 2014, Forrester Research, Inc.

Leverage Search As A More Efficient And Effective BI UI

Search capabilities built into most BI platforms are a step in the right direction, but they are hardly enough. Such built-in search capabilities are typically limited to searching for existing reports (the most popular feature, with 54% of survey respondents utilizing this functionality) and searching for report keywords (40% of survey respondents utilize this functionality) (see Figure 6). Many of them create custom portals to help with search through their BI data and metadata (38%), but custom portals can become stale as more report types and formats get added.

FIGURE 6
BI Search/Exploration Capabilities



Base: 50 NA manager + professionals who are involved in the decision-making of their enterprise business intelligence

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of ThoughtSpot, September 2014

Given these challenges, there is an opportunity for organizations to develop a more robust BI search UI that can enable broader user access to more data and information in a simplified way. New technology is needed to provide this change through enhanced data exploration/search platforms that can provide benefits such as:

- › **Business user self-service.** This is a core tenant for enabling Agile BI. Providing business users with the tools to perform their own searches and create their own reports is what will enable businesses to respond quickly to changes in the market, especially if the Agile BI tool allows them to access all of their business data.
- › **Guided exploration.** Understanding how to properly search and what to search for can be a challenge. Utilizing search capabilities such as query disambiguation

(autocorrect or suggestions for invalid search requests) and synonym searches can ease some of those challenges. These capabilities make it easier to know when users are making a mistake and help show what data is available for searching.

- › **Solving the “I-don’t-know-what-I-don’t-know” dilemma.** Even the most modern BI tools cannot solve an age-old dilemma of I-don’t-know-what-I-don’t-know. Search technologies are great at that by letting users ask more general questions first and then gradually refining and narrowing down the searches. But search technologies stop short after finding the information without taking the next step to analyze it. BI search/guided exploration applications close that gap by helping users start at the top, find the information they are looking for, and seamlessly jump into analyzing (visualizing, slicing, and dicing) the results.
- › **Modern UI.** Point-and-click drag-and-drop UIs serve their purpose but are quite limiting. Most importantly, they do not leave much room for error and require that users know precisely what they are looking for and where to find it. Guided exploration/search UI is better suited for the modern agile world where the amount of information can be overwhelming and time for training scarce.

Conclusion

Businesses that fail to become agile and are unable to react quickly to changes in the market will be left behind. Reliance on traditional BI is no longer enough to meet changing business objectives. For enterprisewide adoption of BI, business must find ways to simplify BI tools and applications via improved data exploration capabilities that provide access to enterprise data from all data sources. Additionally, this enterprisewide access needs to scale with data volume and across users while preserving data security. Enabling business users to effectively navigate across data silos and create impactful reports and dashboards independently will be crucial for companies looking to make the most of their BI data.

Methodology

This Technology Adoption Profile was commissioned by ThoughtSpot. To create this profile, Forrester leveraged its Business Technographics Global Data And Analytics Survey, 2014. Forrester Consulting supplemented this data with custom survey questions asked of IT and line-of-business professionals who have insight into the business analytics, business intelligence, and big data investments in organizations with \$400 million to \$10 billion in revenue. Survey respondents involved were at the manager level or higher. The auxiliary custom survey was conducted in September 2014. For more information on Forrester's data panel and Tech Industry Consulting services, visit www.forrester.com.

Endnotes

¹ Source: "Forrester's 10-Step Methodology For Shortlisting Business Intelligence Vendors," Forrester Research, Inc., May 23, 2014.

² Source: "Get Ready For BI Change," Forrester Research, Inc., July 10, 2013.

ABOUT FORRESTER CONSULTING

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