



Build or Buy?

*The Case for Buying a Business
Analytics Package*

iQ for Business
Reporting and Analytics made simple

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Introduction

Business intelligence (BI) software originally emerged in response to the need for organizations to access accurate and timely information to support informed business decisions. However, today's BI market has become a bewildering array of tools and platforms so businesses increasingly turn to their internal IT departments to develop their own BI solutions. While BI software – tools, platforms, and applications alike – holds great potential for helping organizations readily access the enterprise information needed to make informed business decisions, the reality of developing such a system in-house is extremely challenging.

Build or Buy?

The decision to build a custom solution or buy a package can be the difference in the success or failure of the business intelligence project. Before making the build or buy decision, the following factors should be considered:

The Three E's of developing an in-house BI solution:

Effort – the daunting task of developing an in-house Business Intelligence application.

Expertise – the staff technical expertise necessary to build it

Experience – knowing how long it will take, how much it will cost, how to manage the project and what to expect in return.

In general, business users are rarely involved in the decision process when it comes to BI, so their need for simplicity is neglected and BI tools from the IT developers are forced upon them. This is a recipe for failure. Typically, of the tools purchased for the entire user population, 90 percent or more end up as "shelf ware." Additionally, advanced users who can make sense of the tools often find themselves spending hours creating a single report.

Embarking on a big, complex BI development project is much easier for large corporations that have the funds to support such an endeavor. Mid-sized companies usually don't have that luxury. Those companies that do forge ahead typically find that the time and money spent pursuing an in-house BI solution only ends up with the same array of complex tools.

While ??? be the primary concern that ultimately drives the decision-making process, we must be careful not to overlook other considerations. As the business will change, so will requirements. Mergers or acquisitions and new products or executives can lead to substantial changes in the business' needs for information. The best solution is one that provides the greatest flexibility at the lowest total cost of ownership (TCO). No matter which direction is chosen, some compromise will be required. When all the factors are assessed, the solution that best fits the organization usually becomes apparent.

Your Competitors

The pace of business has accelerated phenomenally over the past two decades, requiring shorter decision timelines, greater planning precision, and increased transparency with customers. Every time a competitor makes a better decision than you do, you lose something. Organizations with the ability to transform information into action enjoy a strategic advantage over their competitors. Buying your off-the shelf business analytics solution, and acting on the data from it, is an example of a decision that is critical to the organization. So, isn't developing one in-house a bit of an indulgence?

Solution

iQ for Business makes IT easy

Years ago, iQ for Business recognized the need to eliminate the difficulties in developing business analytics for companies that had neither the budget nor the resources for such an IT project. At

iQ for Business, we automated the process of project creation by identifying all the common requirements and we programmed them into a user interface that accommodates the exceptions. Feature by feature, we automated the hard part – the task of building OLAP data warehouses and OLAP cubes – thus making it easy. Because we pushed all the complexity back into the program code, our production level business analytics solution can be up and running in a matter of days, sometimes hours, from scratch.

No More "Sticker Shock"

Most so-called 'business intelligence' solution providers don't actually have an end-to-end solution.

iQ for Business does, and we prove it before you spend a dime.

The next time a vendor claims to have the complete solution, ask them for a fixed-bid!

You see, most such vendors make their money on the massive number of consulting hours required to get the BI operational. Some even make the bold claim in their literature in plain English, but once you sign up and provide the down-payment, the true project costs begin to mount. Not so with iQ for Business.

We offer a real, honest-to-goodness business-ready solution. We install it, configure it to your requirements and leave when you are satisfied. Of course, we are always there when you need us, and we pride ourselves on our customer support, but getting you to where you can make good business decisions is our goal.

How Fast Is Fast?

You can see from many of our Customer Success Stories that we often don't need the week or two consulting time we offer in the product installation because the software is up and running so quickly. So, we simply cut the installation cost and pass the savings to our customers who actually pay less than they expected. When did you last see that happening?

Feel free to download our Customer Success Stories by industry or view our video testimonials straight from our website at www.iQ4bis.com.

How does it all work?

The iQ for Business solution consists of two components: the “front end” and the “back end”. We call our front end product Analysis™ and our back end product DataServer™. Together, they form a complete bridge between the data in the ERP system and the manager who needs that critical view into the business.

iQ for Business DataServer gathers data from your ERP and other business systems and transforms it into a format and structure highly optimized for speedy and useful analysis. The transformed data is placed in multi-dimensional cubes and in a data warehouse, both optimized for business analytics decision makers. We take full advantage of powerful Microsoft tools and platforms such as SQL Server 2005 and 2008, Internet Information Server, Analysis Services, Reporting Services and many other components that enable support for multiple data sources. Saving you from having to go it alone and invest a year or so in bringing all the components together because we've already written the code that extracts and transforms the data for you today.

DataServer Adapters provide Competitive Advantage

iQ for Business DataServer comes with a variety of “Adapters”. Each Adapter is fine-tuned to plug straight into a common ERP system; allowing the implementer to go straight to the analysis view creation stage *without making a single configuration change*.

Having served hundreds of customers over the years, we know exactly where the data in these ERP systems lives and we have coded this knowledge into our Adapters. In addition, we have built variation tolerance into how DataServer handles those exceptions that every system has. Let's say you didn't use the customer region field in Dynamics AX because you are using an earlier version. When you upgrade AX and begin populating the new field, DataServer grafts the new data into your cube automatically, making it available for analysis the same day the new data surfaces. Our customer experience means we often build it before you need it.

All our Adapters are actually created using our DataServer product itself. DataServer includes a Project Creation Wizard to allow the implementer to create an Adapter from scratch. (In the case of common ERP systems, we use the resulting Adapter again and again). This Wizard makes the process so much easier, that what typically takes a year in-house to achieve, our solution can do in less than two weeks.

DataServer

- Automates the process of data extraction from your business systems.
- Creates Microsoft-standard OLAP cubes and database tables.
- Exploits the performance enhancements of SQL Server.
- Creates time-refined data cubes, optimized for business analytics.
- Realigns the ETL project automatically when you want to upgrade your business systems or technologies (e.g. Windows server version).
- Delivers complete system documentation.

Analysis

- Is so easy, the entire user manual is on a mouse pad.
- 'Drilldown dashboarding' allows users to get to the root cause of an issue in 3 or 4 clicks.
- Uses Sparklines and Bullet Graphs for optimal real estate usage.
- Browser Based, requiring nothing to be installed on user's PC.
- Exports live, refreshable reports to Excel and other formats.
- Views any standard Microsoft OLAP cubes.

“Our customer experience allows us to build it before you need it”

Gets Used. Stays Used.

iQ for Business Analysis is the browser-based user interface to your cubes and takes only a few minutes to learn. There are four basic navigations to learn and you're accessing data analysis when and where users need it from the desktop to the most popular mobile devices including iPhone, iPad, Android, and BlackBerry.

Over the years, we have been extremely cautious about how we enhanced the user experience. It remains so easy to use; it looks like a bit of a trick at first glance. We steered away from flashy speedometers, which we believe are a poor use of screen estate (not to mention difficult to understand) and instead incorporated Bullet Graphs and Sparklines to give access to a lot more information in a single view.

"It's the first thing I look at in the morning" many of our customers tell us. "I'm blind without it" others say. "How did I ever do my job before I had iQ for Business?" others ask.

Our mission is to make the hard part easy. Easy to install, support, upgrade and above all, easy for our customers to get the answers they need seamlessly.

Know How. Know Now.

Why risk building your own business analytics solution from scratch? How long will it take, how much will it cost to support and how confident will you be in the data?

Typically, our iQ for Business solution replaces a home-grown system that is costly, difficult to support and above all, unreliable, where the original developers have moved on and users have lost faith in the data coming from the home-grown solution.

With iQ for Business you're up and running in a matter of weeks, sometimes days. We demonstrate our solution on test data first because when you see your own business through the eyes of iQ for Business Analysis for the first time, you will likely rush off to act on what you have learned of the state of your business.

For a demonstration, call us at 888-300-0219 or send an email to info_US@iQ4bis.com