SAP Thought Leadership Paper
Small Businesses and Midsize Companies

A Road Map to Better Data-Driven Decisions

Straightforward Directions for Improving Tactical and Strategic Decision Making

The Best-Run Businesses Run SAP™

Running a company without complete visibility is like driving at night without lights; it's incredibly hard to avoid obstacles. In the case of a business, staying on the road means having the information you need: cash flow, profit and loss, customer buying patterns, inventory levels, and more. Without accurate financial and operational data, you can't assess profitability – let alone make sound tactical and strategic decisions.

Increase Visibility, Insight, and Accountability

As a small or midsize business, you need powerful yet affordable analytics, business intelligence (BI), and mobile functionality – so you can get the information you need to make better business decisions.

To do so, you need to start with trustworthy data from your enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. You must derive insights from predefined and ad hoc reports, interactive dashboards, and rich visualizations. Then you need to deliver information when and where your employees need it. The result? Increased visibility, insight, and accountability that help you manage day-to-day business and drive profitable growth.

Let's look at a road map for better data-driven decisions.

START HERE: GET THE LATEST, MOST ACCURATE INFORMATION

All the speed and analytic horsepower in the world are nothing without trustworthy information. To improve decision making, you need to deliver the right data to the right employees at the right time. And to do that, you must be able to pull complete, consistent, and accurate data from a wide range of sources. Information is a strategic asset – one that helps employees understand opportunities and risk, make better decisions, and comply with regulations while minimizing IT costs.

When you gather data from multiple sources – from databases, to Twitter feeds, to your own legacy systems – you must then consolidate it and turn it into meaningful, relevant information that drives better decisions. The next step is making this high-quality data available wherever and whenever your users need it. With the embedded analytics of SAP® software, employees can access information and insights directly from trusted applications – helping analyze performance, evaluate risk, collaborate, and speed decision making.

Let's see how this works in practice, with a focus on data integration and management.

The SAP Business One application with embedded analytics brings information from remote databases into local memory. Real-time access to transactional data allows your employees to explore more information, supporting faster, better-quality decisions. Workers who once had to search manually through hundreds of forms, for example, can now save time and reduce errors with the freestyle search option of SAP Business One.

Or let's say you want to expand your business. You might start by checking your company's financial status. You can use SAP solutions to get an overview of cash flow, including projected transactions and incoming and outgoing payments. You find that your company owes a considerable amount of money, and you want to investigate further. Accurate, timely data helps you pinpoint a crucial debt: you owe US$266,000 to one of your suppliers. You can then drill down to review current invoices for a quick, accurate look at your financial standing.

Need powerful data management? The Edge edition of SAP BusinessObjects™ BI software includes a version with data management that adds powerful data parsing, cleansing, and address syncing to your business intelligence solution. This prepackaged functionality can be deployed more quickly, giving employees access to reliable, timely data that supports informed decisions.

STAY ON TRACK: GET INSIGHTFUL AD HOC OR INTERACTIVE REPORTS

You need information you can trust, but just as critical is having that information when you need it. At today's speed of business, requisitioning a report from IT just won't cut it. Instead, you need:

- A single, trusted infrastructure that gives employees and partners self-service access to information and insight
- A powerful BI solution that gives employees real-time access to key performance metrics such as sales, cost of goods sold, and profitability – with minimal IT involvement
- A way to present information intuitively, facilitating deeper insight

What if a store manager could know which stores are selling out of high-demand products and then quickly move inventory to prevent outages? What if a collections manager could identify accounts slipping further into collections and then reassign top agents to handle them? With SAP software, you get industry-leading operational and financial reporting plus world-class ad hoc reporting and visualization technology. The result? Empowered, informed users throughout your organization.

Let's say you're a manufacturing CFO and you're trying to protect margins and profitability. You see that the proportion of customer invoices with unauthorized deductions is rising – a threat to profit margins, receivables, and days sales outstanding. Using an SAP Business All-in-One solution, you pull up an up-to-the-minute chart detailing unauthorized deductions and learn that most arise from one customer group. You then drill down further and find that one particular customer, known to make regular high-value purchases, is largely responsible. Now you can take action to improve your performance.

ACCELERATE NOW: EXTEND ANALYTIC POWER TO MOBILE DEVICES

In today's work environment, the need for timely business intelligence doesn't end when you leave the office. To make time-sensitive decisions on the road, managers need around-the-clock real-time visibility into project schedules, available resources, key performance indicators (KPIs), and more. To close a deal or stay competitive, sales reps need to answer customers' critical questions in the moment – not after they return to the office. And to resolve problems without additional on-site visits or resources, service personnel need up-to-date maintenance and account information.

The answer: analytics solutions that work both in the office and on the road – and that bring together transactions, analytics, and real-time information to deliver targeted industry- and role-specific analytics to your favorite mobile device. Employees with mobile access can find answers, resolve customer issues, and access and act on real-time business insights in the office or on a plane – whenever and wherever they need to make decisions.

SAP supports mobile analytics in many ways. Your sales reps, for example, can use SAP Business One on iPads to access information on the go – capturing orders in seconds and transmitting them instantly to the back office to speed fulfillment. The intuitive iPad-based sales model facilitates rapid adoption and offers real-time access to customer, product, and order data. Your sales reps can schedule customer appointments via an automatically synchronized mobile calendar – enabling them to make more customer visits.

REACH YOUR DESTINATION: MAKE BETTER DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS

Use one of these SAP solutions for small businesses and midsize companies to reach your analytics and decision-support destination.

SAP Business One, delivered with a complimentary version of SAP Crystal Reports® software, includes a library of predefined reports, layouts, and graphical presentation options. As a result, you can

Drive sound business decisions with SAP software. You can start with trustworthy data. Derive insights from predefined and ad hoc reports, interactive dashboards, and visualizations. And deliver information when and where your employees need it.

generate, explore, and deliver compelling insights – from the big picture down to the smallest detail. And your employees can run reports more easily in the office or on the road, without help from IT.

The SAP Business ByDesign® solution – a software-as-a-service offering with in-memory analytics – provides up-to-the-second analysis and reporting. You get a comprehensive view into every aspect of your business – from warehouse and production to customer, product, and supplier performance. Prebuilt dashboards, enabled by SAP Crystal Dashboard Design software, give you real-time snapshots of KPIs including sales performance, overdue receivables, and year-to-date revenue.

SAP Business All-in-One solutions use powerful embedded analytics to give you the visibility and insight to better manage performance and improve alignment and accountability. Preconfigured interactive dashboards and graphical reports highlight sales, service, purchasing, manufacturing, product line, and customer profitability.

SAP BusinessObjects BI, Edge edition, provides comprehensive business intelligence to increase transparency and improve decision making. This versatile solution, packaged and priced for midsize companies, provides flexible ad hoc reporting and analysis, personalized dashboards, and rich visualizations. Powerful data integration and management give you the quality data to make informed decisions. Prepackaged data mart functions simplify deployment, helping to ensure faster and more accurate data integration.

SAP BusinessObjects Mobile software gives you mobile access to SAP BusinessObjects BI solutions, including SAP BusinessObjects BI, Edge edition, for in-the-moment access to key business intelligence data, reports, and dashboards.

LEARN MORE

Find out why so many small businesses and midsize companies rely on SAP® software to turn information into actionable insight. Our business management, business intelligence, and mobile solutions are designed to work together and with your existing infrastructure – at a price that's right for your growing business.

For more information about SAP solutions for small businesses and midsize companies, please visit www.sap.com/sme.

www.sap.com/contactsap

CMP22089 (12/09) ©2012 SAP AG. All rights reserved.

SAP, R/3, SAP NetWeaver, Duet, PartnerEdge, ByDesign, SAP BusinessObjects Explorer, StreamWork, SAP HANA, and other SAP products and services mentioned herein as well as their respective logos are trademarks or registered trademarks of SAP AG in Germany and other countries.

Business Objects and the Business Objects logo, BusinessObjects, Crystal Reports, Crystal Decisions, Web Intelligence, Xcelsius, and other Business Objects products and services mentioned herein as well as their respective logos are trademarks or registered trademarks of Business Objects Software Ltd. Business Objects is an SAP company.

Sybase and Adaptive Server, iAnywhere, Sybase 365, SQL Anywhere, and other Sybase products and services mentioned herein as well as their respective logos are trademarks or registered trademarks of Sybase Inc. Sybase is an SAP company.

Crossgate, m@gic EDDY, B2B 360°, and B2B 360° Services are registered trademarks of Crossgate AG in Germany and other countries. Crossgate is an SAP company.

All other product and service names mentioned are the trademarks of their respective companies. Data contained in this document serves informational purposes only. National product specifications may vary.

These materials are subject to change without notice. These materials are provided by SAP AG and its affiliated companies ("SAP Group") for informational purposes only, without representation or warranty of any kind, and SAP Group shall not be liable for errors or omissions with respect to the materials. The only warranties for SAP Group products and services are those that are set forth in the express warranty statements accompanying such products and services, if any. Nothing herein should be construed as constituting an additional warranty.

The Best-Run Businesses Run SAP™