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# BIScorecard Strategic and Product Summary – Q2 2008

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## BIScorecard Strategic and Product Summary

The BI market changed considerably in 2007, with all the major software vendors acquiring or releasing new BI capabilities.

The good news for customers is that it has raised the profile of business intelligence from an afterthought to one of more strategic importance. Particularly in the tightening economy, the need for businesses to operate efficiently, reduce costs, and retain customers is now a matter of economic survival. Business intelligence facilitates these business goals.

The challenge for customers deploying BI products is in readjusting to the changed vendor landscape. How much should existing vendor relationships—whether through the RDMBS or ERP--influence BI buying? Should such strategic issues as account management and volume pricing outweigh product features and functions? Is BIBI standardization even possible and if so, under what circumstances and with what trade-offs?

In considering these challenges and changing market conditions, BIScorecard recommends the following:

- Customers who have good relationships and successful deployments with an existing BI vendor should not change BI products simply because their preferred ERP/RDBMS vendor acquired a competing provider. All of the acquired vendors have committed to remaining application and database agnostic. While proprietary tactics may have worked for vendors in the past, it is a losing strategy today. The high switching costs for replacing a successful BI deployment would not be offset either by greater licensing discounts or by business value added. Note, though, that this assumes the existing deployment has traction. If the BI deployment is not succeeding, then the changing vendor landscape is an opportunity to re-assess the existing BI tool strategy.
- Customers who have deployed products that are no longer the lead BI products should avoid making substantial investments in legacy BI products. This applies mainly to Oracle Standard Edition, Oracle Hyperion System 9 BI+ (not Essbase), SAP NetWeaver BI (not BW), and Business Objects performance management modules. While it appears that vendors will be supporting these legacy application for years (in the case of Oracle “forever”), the leading products will receive the majority of enhancements, technical support, and marketing dollars. This subsequently affects availability of resources and expertise in the marketplace for companies that rely on consultants and contractors.
- As the product summary scorecard reflects, no single vendor has the best capabilities in **all** the core BI modules and related segments. For this reason, the trend in standardization is more one of a “predominant” standard rather than an “exclusive” standard. Companies should begin their standardization efforts first by eliminating competing modules that are business facing, for example, standardizing on a single business query tool or a single dashboard tool. As a second phase of standardization, companies should adopt as many modules from a single BI vendor as possible as a way of reducing licensing costs, reducing cost of ownership, and improving business analysis and navigation across

modules. Weaker modules of the BI suite standard should be supplemented with stronger products when the cost/benefit analysis justifies expanding the tool portfolio.

- To date, BI standardization efforts in enterprise customers have focused primarily on rationalizing the number of competing BI tools rather than on an end-to-end BI solution that includes other components within the BI lifecycle such as the database, data integration, data quality, and analytic applications. Smaller companies who use Microsoft SQL Server exclusively as their database platform seem to be an exception. They tend to move into BI by using the other Microsoft BI components that come bundled, such as Integration Services, Reporting Services, and Analysis Services. However, following the industry consolidation, Oracle ERP customers and SAP customers are looking more closely at the newly acquired BI capabilities, Oracle BI Enterprise Edition and Business Objects, XI 3.0 respectively. Even here, standardization goes only so far, as the analytic applications from Oracle currently use Informatica PowerCenter as the ETL component, not Oracle's Sunopsis!
- For IT departments who feel "safer" investing in solutions in the big four (SAP, IBM, Oracle, Microsoft), expect push back from individual business units and users who have their own BI budgets and who will give greater weight to BI product capabilities and ease of doing business.

With so much activity in the BI tools market, it's easy for IT to get sidetracked and forget the ultimate value of business intelligence: to provide business users with a way to access and interact with data to manage and improve the business. With either approach, it's critical that customers understand the role of the BI platform in delivering measurable business value. It is the face of BI; underestimate its importance to engage users and facilitate fact-based decision-making, and your BI project will have mediocre success. Conversely, technology issues should not be allowed to overshadow the business objectives of the BI initiative. No matter which solution you select for an enterprise standard or new BI implementation, naysayers will second-guess that decision. The key to managing such second-guessers is to follow an objective, agreed-upon methodology in developing your BI tool strategy. This selection process must include both the business users and IT experts. (Refer to the complementary BIScorecard [selection methodology](#).)

This report discusses strategic criteria to consider when evaluating vendors and major product modules. Scores are provided for eight leading vendors based on extensive evaluations, customer interviews, and vendor briefings.

## Background

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### Evaluation Methodology

Some of the BI products look increasingly similar and yet beneath the covers, there are significant differences. At BIScorecard, we want to make sure you buy the best products for your company and avoid shelfware! BIScorecard is the only analyst firm that tests BI suites hands-on based on over 100+ detailed criteria and with the customer perspective. Within each strategic and functional area, vendors and products are scored on various criteria that are based on:

- Features and aspects that customers often look for in evaluations
- Unique capabilities identified while evaluating products
- Vendor marketing claims that are either a point of differentiation or confusion

To evaluate products, we rely on customer references, feedback from partners and consultants, and vendor briefings and demonstrations. To ensure an objective, consistent comparison of products, we also evaluate the software hands-on.

Within a given feature category, 10 to 25 detailed features are considered (refer to the BIScorecard\_Detail spreadsheet to see the full list of criteria and weightings). Summary scores are determined based on a weighted score within each category. In some cases, the summary percentages may not translate directly to the summary score for the following reasons: 1) a summary score may be rounded up or down when there is a wider gap among summary scores, 2) missing data points are considered in the totals and adjusted accordingly, 3) the vendor has released new capabilities that have been demonstrated but not fully tested.

Each feature is assigned a score of 0 to 3:

Score	Explanation
3	Exceptional capabilities.
2	Very good capabilities.
1	Limited capabilities, difficult to do, or may require a work around.
0	Minimal capabilities out of the box. The software may require customization or coding to accomplish.