

2011 **Successful BI Survey**

*Best practices in business intelligence
for greater business impact*

By Cindi Howson

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Background

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About the Author

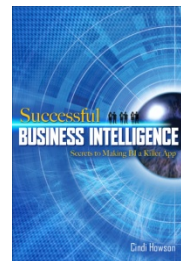


Cindi Howson is the founder of BI Scorecard, a resource for in-depth BI tool evaluations based on exclusive hands-on testing. She is the author of *Successful Business Intelligence: Secrets to Making BI a Killer App*, a TDWI faculty member, and a contributor to *Information Week*. She is a frequent speaker at BI industry events around the world and has been quoted in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Irish Times*, and *ComputerWorld*. As a consultant, she advises clients on BI strategies and tool selections. Prior to founding BI Scorecard, Howson was a manager at Deloitte & Touche and a BI standards leader for a Fortune 500 company. She has an MBA

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About the Survey and Report

This survey was first conducted in 2007 as part of research for the book *Successful Business Intelligence: Secrets to Making BI a Killer App*. The 2007 survey was conducted in May and had 512 qualified respondents. The 2009 survey was conducted in July and August and had 324 qualified respondents. The 2011 survey was conducted in May and June and had a total of 653 responses, 602 of which were considered qualified respondents. The survey was promoted through TDWI newsletters and articles, *Information Week* newsletters, and BI Scorecard newsletters. Vendors did not sponsor this survey but were allowed to promote it. 210 responses were received via vendor promotions. Questions that involved rankings used random sort orders on the possible answers to avoid skewing results. Analyses for particular vendor and product success rates with fewer than 8 customer data points were omitted. Responses from vendors and consultants who were considered exclusive resellers of a particular BI product were also excluded from this portion of the analyses.



The purpose of this report is to provide updated survey results and findings on how companies can ensure a more successful BI program with bigger business impact. It is intended to complement the book, which has a broader focus and more in-depth discussion of BI case studies.

Executive Summary

In a difficult economy and fiercely competitive business environment, business intelligence is now essential. Companies are forced to make smarter decisions, faster. For some, it's a matter of business survival. For others, it's a matter of being the best and outperforming competitors. For public service agencies, smarter decisions allow such organizations to continue to serve the public, despite shrinking budgets.

BI success rates and impact increased slightly in 2011. While there are some very successful BI deployments, the majority are stuck in the middle, with only slight to moderate success and business impact. The value of business intelligence and its ability to contribute to positive performance is influenced by a number of factors, including technical, organizational, and cultural. Aligning BI efforts to business goals is the most important success factor. Alignment requires a strong business/IT partnership and ongoing dialogue. Executive-level sponsorship facilitates alignment, and the good news here is that now 89% of BI projects have that level of sponsorship. However, while executive level support is wide-spread with initial efforts, survey respondents expressed frustration when executive support changes and wanes over time, fails to address competing priorities across diverse stakeholders, or to adequately fund BI initiatives.

Beyond organizational aspects, a number of technical factors continue to contribute to (or hinder) stronger BI impact. Data quality continues to be the most important factor, with 72% of companies saying they have achieved a high level of data quality. However, the ability to access data in different places is a critical requirement many companies have not addressed. Business users often do not trust the data because of a lack of common business definitions or meta data to facilitate understanding of where the data originated and how it was transformed.

The majority of companies have standardized on a BI platform across a company or per line of business (69%). There is a strong correlation to business impact for those companies that take a strategic approach to their BI tool portfolio. The need for greater agility, better dashboards, and visual discovery tools have forced companies to supplement predominant standards with specialty capabilities. Companies who deploy tools from specialty vendors report higher success rates and business impact than companies who use a BI platform exclusively. Major software upgrades, as well as innovations such as mobile and cloud, force companies to continually re-assess and evolve their BI tool portfolio.

This report presents findings from the 2011 Successful BI Survey and recommendations for greater BI success and business impact.