Successful BI Survey

Best practices in business intelligence for greater business impact

By Cindi Howson
# Table of Contents

Background........................................................................................................... 4

Copyright and License ....................................................................................... 4

About the Author ............................................................................................... 4

About the Survey and Report ........................................................................... 4

Executive Summary .......................................................................................... 5

The State of BI Success and Impact ................................................................ 6

Measures of Success ......................................................................................... 6

Pervasive BI Remains a Vision ......................................................................... 11

Organizational Factors ..................................................................................... 15

Technical Success Factors ................................................................................ 23

Managing the BI Tool Portfolio ....................................................................... 25

BI Improvements and Innovations ................................................................... 27

BI Standardization .......................................................................................... 28

BI Standardization by Vendor ......................................................................... 30

BI Success and Business Impact by Vendor .................................................. 37

BI Customer Satisfaction ............................................................................... 43

Recommendations ............................................................................................ 51

Appendix – Survey Demographics .................................................................. 53
Figures

- **Figure 1.** The majority of companies show at least moderate BI success, but only a minority are very successful. _____ 6
- **Figure 2.** Qualitative measures of success are more widely used than quantitative. ___________________________ 7
- **Figure 3.** BI’s contribution to business impact declined in 2013. ___________________________ 8
- **Figure 4.** There is greater business impact with more mature BI deployments. ___________________________ 9
- **Figure 5.** Consultants and BI Managers report significant business impact. ___________________________ 10
- **Figure 6.** Overall BI adoption remains flat, but mobile BI improves adoption. ___________________________ 11
- **Figure 7.** BI adoption is higher for successful deployments. ___________________________ 12
- **Figure 8.** BI usage varies by job type. ___________________________ 13
- **Figure 9.** BI usage varies by decision and data update frequency. ___________________________ 13
- **Figure 10.** Organizational factors affect BI success and impact. (2012 survey). ___________________________ 15
- **Figure 11.** BI teams have limited resources. ___________________________ 16
- **Figure 12.** Certain executive sponsors contribute to BI having greater business impact. ___________________________ 17
- **Figure 13.** BI experts often report to central IT. ___________________________ 18
- **Figure 14.** BI has highest impact when BI team reports directly to CEO or to business unit. ___________________________ 19
- **Figure 15.** Degree to which business and IT work as partners. ___________________________ 20
- **Figure 16.** BI deployment approach and impact. ___________________________ 22
- **Figure 17.** Importance of technical factors in BI success (2012 survey data). ___________________________ 23
- **Figure 18.** Status of technical challenges. ___________________________ 24
- **Figure 19.** Fixed reports and business query modules are the most successfully deployed modules. ___________________________ 25
- **Figure 20.** BI standardization has increased significantly since 2005. ___________________________ 28
- **Figure 21.** Companies with significant BI impact are more likely to have a BI standard. ___________________________ 29
- **Figure 22.** BI standards by product. ___________________________ 30
- **Figure 23.** BI investment plans. ___________________________ 31
- **Figure 24.** The majority of customers plan to increase number of users. ___________________________ 32
- **Figure 25.** Type of BI standard. ___________________________ 32
- **Figure 26.** QlikView BI has the largest portion of individual business unit BI buyers. ___________________________ 33
- **Figure 27.** BI standards by size of company revenues. ___________________________ 34
- **Figure 28.** BI deployment size varies by vendor. ___________________________ 35
- **Figure 29.** Total BI tool usage, regardless of standardization approach. ___________________________ 36
- **Figure 30.** BI success rates by BI platform standard for broad BI solutions. ___________________________ 37
- **Figure 31.** BI success rates by BI platform standard for specialty solutions. ___________________________ 38
- **Figure 32.** Business impact by BI platform standard. ___________________________ 39
- **Figure 33.** BI adoption rate by BI standard. ___________________________ 41
- **Figure 34.** BI adoption rate by user segment and BI standard. ___________________________ 42
- **Figure 35.** Rating of BI vendors for account management. ___________________________ 44
- **Figure 36.** Ranking of BI vendors for technical support. ___________________________ 44
- **Figure 37.** Ranking of BI vendors for on-line resources ___________________________ 45
- **Figure 38.** Rating of BI vendors for professional resources. ___________________________ 46
- **Figure 39.** Rating of BI products for functionality. ___________________________ 47
- **Figure 40.** Overall users say BI tools are easy to use. ___________________________ 48
- **Figure 41.** Easier-to-use BI tools also have high analytic complexity. ___________________________ 49
- **Figure 42.** Rating of BI products for software quality. ___________________________ 50
Background

Copyright and License

This publication may not be copied, reproduced, or retransmitted in any form, including via e-mail or network file systems. Access to this report has been granted only to the individual document purchaser. For multi-user licenses or re-distribution rights, please contact info@biscorecard.com.

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: Unlock the Value of BI & Big Data, 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, Forbes, 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 from Rice University.

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 2013 survey was conducted in October through December, with 513 qualified respondents. The survey was promoted through TDWI newsletters and articles, Information Week newsletters, BI Scorecard newsletters, and social media. Vendors did not sponsor this survey but were allowed to promote it. Questions that involved rankings used random sort orders on the possible answers to avoid skewing results. Responses from vendors and consultants who were considered exclusive resellers of a particular BI product were also excluded from the vendor portion of the analyses. Multiple responses from the same IP address were not permitted.

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

With growing data volumes, fiercer competition, and consumer demand for better customer service and personalization, business intelligence is essential to empowering decision-makers. The BI industry is awash with the buzz of big data and business analytics, but many companies struggle with the basics of accessing data, particularly new data sources. Unearthing insights from expanding data volumes and breadth of data sources requires more flexible tools, skilled analysts, and shifts in how IT delivers BI. BI has long been considered a tool for power users and for management to run the business. However, with easier-to-use tools, mobile BI, and embedded BI, front-line and operational workers are also exploiting the value of data.

BI success rates have remained flat since the survey was first conducted in 2007. However, the portion of customers saying BI has delivered significant business impact declined in 2013 by six percentage points to only 28% and is the lowest since the survey began. While there are some very successful and impactful BI deployments, the majority are stuck in the middle, with only slight to moderate success and business impact. BI adoption as a percentage of employees remains flat at 22%, but companies who have successfully deployed mobile BI show the highest adoption at 42% of employees.

The value of business intelligence and its ability to contribute to positive performance is influenced by a number of factors, the most significant being organizational and cultural. These are hard issues to address, and the industry spends a disproportionate amount of time on technical issues. Executives can often address organizational and cultural challenges, making leadership the most important organizational criterion for success. Aligning BI efforts to business goals is the second most important success factor. Alignment requires a strong business/IT partnership and ongoing dialogue, a continued challenge in many companies. However, strained BI resources make it increasingly difficult to expand the reach of BI or for companies to take advantage of new innovations. As demand for new data sources, more users, and analytic complexity increase, BI teams have to work smarter, and business users have to embrace self-service BI.

Beyond organizational aspects, a number of technical factors continue to contribute to (or hinder) stronger BI impact. Flexible and easy-to-use BI tools have replaced data quality as the most important technical challenge. That these issues have increased in the rankings reflects the growing need for central IT or BI teams to balance enterprise needs versus business agility. Business users can no longer wait for all the data to be strictly modeled and stored in a data warehouse before it can be accessed and explored. Data quality continues to be an important factor, with only a slight majority (54%) of companies saying they have achieved a high level of data quality. As users are demanding access to new and more data sources, this will pose greater challenges on data quality.

Most companies have standardized on a BI platform across the enterprise or per line of business. There is a strong correlation to business impact for those companies that take a strategic approach to their BI tool portfolio. However, of those with a predominant BI standard, only 40% say it’s an exclusive standard, meaning the majority of customers supplement their standard with products from specialty vendors. The need for greater agility, better dashboards, and visual data discovery tools has 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. While big data stole the headlines in 2012, dashboards, new data sources, and self-service BI are the main priority for investments in 2014, followed by mobile BI, visual data discovery, and upgrading to the latest BI release.

This report presents findings from the Successful BI Survey conducted in fall 2013 and recommendations for greater BI success and business impact.