

TECH CHOICES



September 28, 2005

Cognos 8 BI Redefines Cognos' BI Approach And Raises The Bar For Integrated BI Platforms

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Companies are looking for a way to reduce the number of redundant BI platforms, and the best way to do that is to standardize on fewer integrated platforms that can support multiple BI reporting and analysis categories. Cognos has not only joined the short list of BI and platform vendors that can deliver these various reporting solutions on a single platform, but, in addition, it has raised the bar for how BI platforms must be capable of being integrated with the rest of the technology assets in a services-oriented environment.

RESEARCH CATALYST

Product release of Cognos 8 Business Intelligence in September 2005.

COGNOS 8 BI MARKS END OF SEPARATE BRANDS AND COGNOS' CLIENT/SERVER PLATFORM

Cognos has spent several years and countless person hours redefining how it will architecturally and philosophically deliver BI. Gone are the separate Cognos brands DecisionStream (data integration), Impromptu (query), PowerPlay (OLAP), Metrics Manager (scorecarding), and even ReportNet (ad hoc query and reporting) — they've all been replaced with Cognos 8 Business Intelligence. This is quite a bit more than marketing and branding, as Cognos has re-architected each product into the service-oriented architecture (SOA) platform initially launched with ReportNet in 2003 and extended the reach of each functional area. By doing so, Cognos has raised the bar for integrated BI platforms and positioned itself well to compete with pure-play BI leaders like Business Objects¹, Hyperion, and SAS² — along with database and application platform vendors like Microsoft, Oracle, and SAP.

The most significant features available in Cognos 8 BI are:

- **Single, integrated reporting platform.** Cognos 8 BI contains several key BI reporting and analysis capabilities, such as analytic reporting, enterprise reporting, metadata repository, scorecard engine, and security administration.
- **Wealth of studios.** Cognos has replaced the separate OLAP, query, reporting, and scorecard products with this single integrated product. Cognos 8 BI surfaces the capabilities within separate but linked “studios” that can work with and leverage what is done in the other studios and deliver a more unified look and feel to BI developers.



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- **Architectural services orientation.** Building on the successes of ReportNet, Cognos has expanded its SOA architecture to the entire platform, effectively removing any barriers to integrating Cognos BI functionality, such as OLAP or scorecarding, within non-Cognos applications, such as ERP or CRM applications.
- **Enhancements to many core services.** Each core service received updates, including: 1) OLAP and analysis (formerly PowerPlay), which can now access non-Cognos OLAP cubes like SAP BW, Hyperion Essbase, and Microsoft Analysis Services; 2) reporting (formerly ReportNet), which can now create reports using relational, OLAP, and XML data; and 3) scorecarding (formerly Cognos Metrics Manager), which now has support for objectives, projects, and countermeasures.

These services can be administratively assigned to a single machine, several machines, or a cluster, as appropriate. The current release of Cognos 8 BI supports Linux, Unix (HP-UX, Solaris, and AIX), and Windows.

What will the effect be for Cognos customers?

The Cognos 8 BI product will have a significant effect on existing customers in a number of areas, including:

- **Licensing.** Cognos has been promoting its role-based licensing model, in which a user category is defined as one of several “authoring” development licenses or a “consumer,” or recipient, license. Although this sounds simple, in practice there are nine different roles, and it's important to match specific roles to individuals before implementing Cognos 8 BI. Cognos has committed to both continued support for DecisionStream, Metrics Manager, PowerPlay, and ReportNet customers, along with license investment recognition for customers with legacy products (e.g., Cognos Query, Impromptu,) via discounts.
- **Product migration and updates.** Some Cognos products are considered upgrades with Cognos 8 BI — including Metrics Manager, PowerPlay, and ReportNet — which means that existing Cognos Series 7 components will automatically work without changes in Cognos 8 BI³. Other Cognos products will require migrations — including Cognos Query, Impromptu, Impromptu Web Reports (IWR), and Visualizer which means that there will be a requirement to move to the new product using a combination of migration utilities and Cognos-provided services, or by rewriting existing BI applications.

What will the effect be on prospects?

In the past, Cognos prospects had to choose between the individual functional areas and then select the Cognos branded product for that functionality: OLAP (PowerPlay), query (Impromptu), scorecards (Metrics Manager), the combined Series 7 platform, or the ReportNet product on a completely different architecture. With Cognos 8 BI, prospects will:

- **Select the single platform.** Cognos 8 BI is a completely integrated BI platform that will accommodate all of the available BI functionality under one product.
- **Select which services are needed.** Prospects can choose to add on licenses for as many or as few services as they might need. For example, if a customer doesn't need to build a scorecard application, they wouldn't license the scorecard service. If they decide at a later date to add this functionality, there's no new product to install or manage, just another service to be licensed and turned on.

On the other hand, this could be an issue for existing Cognos clients looking to start a new project in a separate business area that already uses one or more of the Cognos legacy products. Until the existing customer group decides to upgrade both licenses and technology to the new architecture of Cognos 8 BI, the parent company would have to maintain two separate and radically different BI platforms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PROCEED WITH CAUTION: COGNOS 8 BI IS A BIG CHANGE FOR BOTH COGNOS AND CUSTOMERS

Change may be good for BI; however, the magnitude of change from Series 7 client/server architecture to Cognos 8 BI SOA will be greater than merely switching from one reporting tool to another. Companies must:

- **Scrutinize the licensing arrangement.** Roles are the rule, and companies must understand that Cognos roles need to be mapped specifically to a more complex array of end users. Pay close attention to how many of each role you are licensing and how soon these users can actually take advantage of the licenses to avoid paying for shelfware.
- **Get the enterprise architect involved ASAP.** Cognos 8 BI is an enterprise-class BI platform, and the enterprise architect needs to be included in all discussions involving the Cognos 8 BI platform in order to leverage the SOA.
- **Be deliberate with upgrades and cautious with migrations.** Cognos 8 BI will require both, and the opportunity for failure will be greatest with migrations. Take advantage of Cognos-delivered migration utilities and qualified migration services providers, and proceed at a deliberate pace.

WHAT IT MEANS

NEW OPEN SOA ARCHITECTURE = MORE UPSIDE FOR OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL BI APPS

If you look at BI platforms as a departmental solution used by a limited group of non-IT developers, then having an open SOA in the BI tool is rather meaningless. If, however, you look at BI as an enterprise-class application dependent on tight integration with all data and application assets, then having an open SOA in the BI platform will be advantageous — and in some instances, mandatory. Companies are looking for BI platforms that can deliver greater functionality while simultaneously complementing the rest of the enterprise architecture. Cognos 8 BI delivers both extended BI reporting and analytic functionality in an integrated SOA.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Business Objects delivered its Business Objects XI product, integrating analytic reporting (WebIntelligence) with enterprise reporting (Crystal Enterprise). See the January 11, 2005, Quick Take “Business Objects Delivers XI Under Extreme Conditions.”
- ² SAS integrated several core BI engines under a single platform, SAS 9. See the March 30, 2004, Tech Choices “SAS Institute 9.1 Platform Benefits And Risks.”
- ³ This information was provided by Cognos and has not been verified with existing customers that have migrated to Cognos 8 BI.