

Adaptive authoring with IBM Cognos 8 BI

The adaptive authoring environment

Conventional authoring environments, such as banded report writers, make reporting difficult, expensive, and time-consuming. The report lifecycle – creating, distributing, and modifying reports – is a major contributor to the IT workload. Most departments struggle with a backlog of requests. Modifying reports is usually as long and complex a process as creating one, whether the modification is simple (adding a chart to page) or complex (recreating the entire report in Japanese).

Why the IT backlog exists

The typical report lifecycle frustrates both report producers and consumers alike. Conventional report authoring environments require custom coding and are cumbersome to use. Only a limited number of authors have the skill set required to use them. Depending on the backlog of requests, building a new report could take weeks or months. If the report doesn't meet a user's needs and has to be modified, the cycle starts over again. Depending on the complexity of the finished product, it could be weeks before the user sees the next version. During this time, the user lacks the information needed to make better business decisions. IT spends valuable time and money struggling to keep up to the continual demand for information. The importance of BI for decision-making and performance management is now too great for companies to continue working in this way.

Decision-makers need more flexibility in the way they manage information. They need to be able to access, manipulate and display information, and then modify that information as quickly and as often as required.

They need an alternative to waiting for IT to work through the backlog. They need the freedom to change their minds.

Reporting with IBM Cognos 8 BI

IBM Cognos 8 Business Intelligence is the first all-in-one BI software product to satisfy every type of enterprise reporting requirement. It features a Web-services architecture with a zero-footprint interface for all BI users from report consumers to professional BI authors. It presents a modern approach to authoring that allows users to create and modify BI more quickly and easily than they ever thought possible.

Specific features of the adaptive authoring environment

The IBM Cognos 8 BI Adaptive Authoring Environment delivers three key benefits to the BI authoring process:

1. Easier, faster, better creation and modification of reports.
2. Output well beyond the capabilities of banded report writing applications.
3. Optional, self-serve authoring capabilities for a broader base of users throughout the enterprise.

Cognos authoring surpasses typical authoring environments that insist on “absolute positioning” of each report object. It enables creativity and adaptability throughout the authoring process. Users see the finished product take shape before their eyes, so they can make modifications at any stage. The final, single report can be presented in any output format – for example, PDF for print or HTML for viewing and email.

Key features include:

- Flexible, zone-based layout of BI objects.
- Dimensionally aware reporting with automatic drill down.
- Dashboard reports with rich visualization.
- Multi-query, multi-source report creation.
- Web objects and applications in HTML-formatted BI output.
- Out-of-the-box prompting and powerful parameter support.
- Multilingual authoring.
- Separation of BI presentation and query layers.
- Multiple logical pages.
- Conditional formatting and layout.

Flexible zone-based layout

Working with Cognos authoring offers the user an experience similar to working in an HTML editor or a word processor. Users can create reports by dragging and dropping objects onto a blank page. And just as adding a new object or new text to a document causes existing text to adjust its position, when adding new elements to a report, existing objects

realign to accommodate it. In addition, sophisticated layout and formatting can be controlled using tables and table cells. The finished product can be output across multiple formats including HTML, PDF, Excel, CSV, and XML.

Dimensionally aware reporting with automatic drill down

With IBM Cognos 8 BI, any report can draw on any combination of data sources giving users the complete view of any business issue. Along with seamless access to relational data, users can also report against OLAP data sources. IBM Cognos 8 BI reporting can access Cognos OLAP cubes as well as other popular OLAP sources, including Microsoft Analysis Services and IBM DB2 OLAP/Essbase.

When authoring reports from OLAP sources, the inherent hierarchical capabilities of the data are conserved and leveraged. Authors can elect to automatically employ drill down and tree controls in reports. For the end user, this delivers the interactivity needed to navigate and explore data hierarchies in both text and chart report objects.

Dashboard creation with rich visualization

Compelling dashboards with rich and interactive content are created with IBM Cognos 8 BI reporting. With the ability to create compound reports from multiple data sources using linked or independent queries, dashboards

deliver at-a-glance views to meet any business monitoring need.

Gauge charts, customizable mapping, and an array of charting capabilities allow for quick understanding of business information. Drillable reports objects, including charts and visualizations, allow navigation to lower levels of detail, related reports, analysis, or other applications.

The benefits of creating dashboards in the report authoring environment, rather than using a separate and additional tool, include the administration and management of the business view. Scheduling, bursting, and version control, as well as output to various formats are all available.

Web objects and applications in HTML-formatted BI output

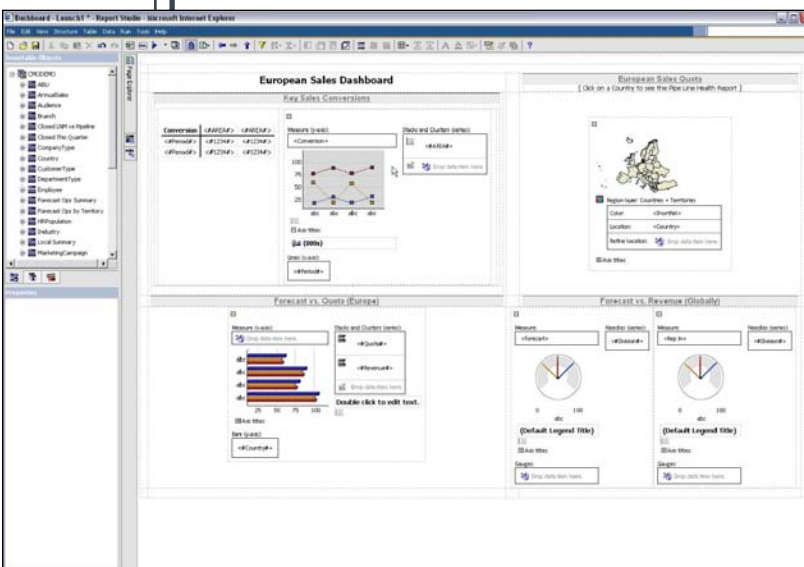
IBM Cognos 8 BI expands the possibilities from standard reports to highly interactive, Web-based BI. Authors have the ability to create reports containing any number of objects: cross tabs, lists, and charts, as well as images, live embedded applications, dynamic HTML items, and logos that can all be linked with one another to provide greater context. IBM Cognos 8 BI gives authors the ability to deliver all elements in parameter-driven context so users have everything they need to make a decision. BI output can be configured to behave like a live Web page, including hover effects and Web application capabilities.

Out-of-the-box prompting and parameter support

Instead of requiring authors to use complex programming languages, IBM Cognos 8 BI ships with a full set of prompt types that can be applied to data. Driven by automation or customized parameter support, these prompts allow users to modify BI criteria such as date and time, and can take the form of a cascading list, a pick list, radio buttons, and more.

Multilingual authoring

The out-of-the-box multilingual capability of IBM Cognos 8 BI means BI deliverables can be authored once and localized automatically. Unlike report writers that require layers of “if-then-else” commands and rigid text overlays, Cognos reporting authors can easily define text and other report characteristics that vary with each language. Reports don’t have to be recreated for each language and authors don’t have to struggle with word wrapping and other text characteristics. IBM Cognos 8 BI provides full user interface support for English, French, German, Japanese, Simplified



Reporting in IBM Cognos 8 BI allows authors to create reports containing any number of objects.

Chinese, Dutch, Finnish, Spanish, Swedish, and Italian. Reports can be delivered in more than 25 languages.

Users control their language preferences for both BI content and the user interface. Report authors can quickly simulate exactly what each of the language effects will be in a report. They do not have to re-login to simulate another user or log into another server. A single report and single server is used for all languages.

This capability includes prompts and controls. For example, the Japanese user interface date control will automatically show the Japanese Imperial Calendar.

Multiple logical pages

With IBM Cognos 8 BI, multiple logical pages can be used for BI content: introduction pages, summaries, table of contents, and prompts. Cognos, an IBM company, provides a user interface that makes it simple for authors to add, rename, and reorder pages, and to navigate among pages to modify content as needed. For example, authoring a telephone bill requires the author to format three pages. Page 1 presents a statement summary; page 2 provides a record of calls made; page 3 presents payment options. Three logical pages can span multiple physical pages.

Achieving this same layout with banded report writers is a complicated and inefficient exercise, requiring authors to add in conditional hiding and showing of the header, subheader, and footers.

Separation of report layout and query layers

IBM Cognos 8 BI reporting separates the layout or presentation layer from the query layer so that even novice users can create sophisticated reports without any knowledge of complicated programming languages. Unlike banded.

SQL or report writers that require coding and “if-then-else” statements for formatting, Cognos reporting offers a simple, browser-based drag-and-drop interface that allows users to easily place report objects on the page.

These can be completely data-independent. Queries can be added later or can be built first and then have formatting applied later. Edited SQL statements can be used at the query layer. This helps increase broad distribution and acceptance of BI across the organization.

Conditional formatting and layout

Adding conditional aspects to a BI report is easy with IBM Cognos 8 BI Condition Explorer. It allows authors to easily hide or show information in a report based on specific conditions. For example, a user’s purchasing application can appear automatically should inventory fall below a certain threshold. In a similar manner, content can be configured to trigger immediate action. For example, inventory numbers could appear red once they fall below a certain number.

Summary

The Adaptive Authoring Environment of IBM Cognos 8 BI provides users with greater flexibility for report authoring.

It gives different types of users more power to shape their results in the way that best suits their needs. It delivers efficiency and effectiveness to the authoring process, enables user self-service, and addresses the IT authoring backlog.

Better performance management

IBM Cognos 8 BI is the only solution that provides complete BI functionality in one product, on a single, proven architecture. It delivers seamless reporting, analysis, scorecarding, dashboards, and event management. This simplifies your IT environment and the way everyone works with information. The result is high user adoption, better decisions, and greater agility across the organization. IBM Cognos 8 BI is the clear choice for BI standardization and a cornerstone of better performance management.

About Cognos, an IBM company

Cognos, an IBM company, is the world leader in business intelligence and performance management solutions. It provides world-class enterprise planning and BI software and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. Cognos was acquired by IBM in February 2008. For more information, visit <http://www.cognos.com>.



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