



6 factors to consider in a self-service BI tool

Your ultimate guide to effectively decide on the right BI solution for your business

Data analytics over the past few years have been democratised and made accessible for everyone. You no longer have to acquire special skills just to be able to analyse and visualise your business' data. All you need is a good business intelligence (BI) tool to help you perform that job. BI has come quite a long way and there's a plethora of business intelligence tools in the market today that it becomes overwhelming which is right for you.

So what are the fundamental criteria for evaluating a BI tool? Here's a list of factors that we have collected based on our experience from implementing BI with our customers.



#1 Ease of use

Even with flashy reports or how important the data is, with a BI tool that is hard to use, you can expect little to no adoption at all which will render it useless. Keep your BI tool simple and easy to use, devoid of technical terms or database syntax that will alienate your users.

Your BI tool should allow your business users to 'self-serve' so they can perform a variety of data visualisation and report generation without having to rely on IT all the time. A self-service BI tool will allow your users to easily identify trends and keep up with the changes in a matter of few clicks.

It should also have a responsive interface and accessible either through a browser or an app through a desktop or mobile device to give your users the flexibility to work however way they want, wherever they are. It should also allow them to collaborate, communicate and share their reports to give way for questions, comments or feedback. Involve them in the selection process to ensure that you consider these needs and your team's perspective.



#2 Security

While most businesses would support mobility for their people, it is equally important to consider security and risk management for your data. With data breaches becoming increasingly a high priority concern, your BI solution should enable you to control security clearances, profiles or permissions of users in varying levels. Sensitive data should only be accessible to people in your organisation who have the appropriate authority to view it.

There are also modern technologies and services that can help you ensure you have a secured BI tool. Data partitioning, data loss prevention (DLP), information rights management (IRM) and multi-factor authentication (MFA) are some of the technologies that you can utilise to authenticate and authorise users. You can also check on which compliance regulations that your BI tool adheres to ensure that privacy, data protection, data transfer and location policies are enforced.

#3 Performance

Business users hate to wait and true enough, they won't have to. It only takes milliseconds to get answers in a Google Search so your users will get impatient if it takes longer than that. With a powerful and modern BI tool, they should be able to create reports and analyse and visualise data via interactive dashboards in real-time.

Another factor that you should consider is the BI system's capability to support multiple platforms and mash up data from different sources as your data will most likely reside in various applications. It can come from your ERP, CRM, HR and other systems that could use different database platforms, which could add to the complexity of analysing your data.



#4 Globalisation

If you have global operations or are exploring to do so, you should add to your considerations the support for multiple languages. Allowing your people to customise the language displayed by your BI tool will make them more productive and efficient in using it.

#5 Scalability

Any organisation aspiring to grow should also expect that reporting and analysis requirements will also increase and will become more complex. Your BI system should be able to handle large databases, multiple sources and additional users over time. Deploying your BI system in the cloud will also free you up from investing in additional hardware for storage and provides you nearly unlimited scalability.

#6 Cost

Implementing a BI solution will usually require investing on software, hardware, consulting and after-sales support and this is mostly prevalent when deploying on-premise solutions. Cloud-based solutions on the other hand, are mostly on annual subscription per user, offers rapid deployments and reduced requirements for additional resources. There are tons of BI tools available in the market today designed for certain markets. The key is to plan for how much budget you are willing to spend before looking into the solution.

FINAL WORDS

There are several BI solutions out there on the market today and these factors about apply to all BI tools regardless of the platform. These are a lot to consider and maybe not all providers would fit all of these factors. Just remember to weigh in on what is the most important for your users and your business' needs.

We hope this whitepaper will guide you towards making the right decision but if you need further guidance or assistance in finding the right BI tool for you, get in touch with Professional Advantage. We have helped our customers achieve more by providing the right IT solutions for their business over the last two decades.

Quick Tip

ARE YOU AN EXISTING OFFICE 365 USER?

If you currently have Office 365 and have not yet used Power BI, you could be losing out on immense value for your organisation without having to purchase additional software. Power BI (Desktop) is Microsoft's self-service business intelligence tool that comes free with Office 365 Business or Enterprise SKU's. The free version already gives you the capability to quickly analyse and visualise your data and share it with your peers wherever you are.

Want to see Power BI in action? Schedule a free demonstration or consultation with one of our business productivity consultants today.



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