

Rich Information Applications or Business Intelligence – How Do I Choose?

When selecting reporting technologies, it is important to understand the applications and the users they were designed to serve. The assumptions and technical decisions made by vendors shape the capabilities, performance, reliability and scalability of their products—and clearly reveal that reporting technologies are not all created equal.

Target Applications

Traditional Business Intelligence (BI) tools are designed to help self-sufficient power users to access, massage and present information to management. In contrast, as an information application platform that supports Rich Internet Applications, Actuate is designed to:

- *Provide the integrated development platform required to create data-driven RIAs; complete with a programming environment, object-oriented reuse, advanced scalability and multi-project support*
- *Deliver applications within a self-service, zero-training environment that encourages adoption of both information and technology by 100% of employees, customers and partners*
- *Provide regular and on-demand content to all users from a single unified platform so they can make the right decisions at the right time*
- *Streamline financial, operational and customer interaction processes with up-to-the-moment information to slash costs and improve customer satisfaction*
- *Match collaborative, spreadsheet or brochure-quality reporting styles to user skills, roles and objectives to provide the richest, most personalized user experience possible*

Information Consumers and Producers

Today's BI technologies serve the needs of power users who comprise less than 5% of the enterprise and address the needs of external audiences poorly or not at all. Instead of supporting hundreds of users, Actuate-built applications can serve up to hundreds of thousands of users - employees, customers and partners.

User roles vary across an organization and are commonly dictated by area of responsibility, job function, or their placement in the management hierarchy. The first step in establishing a successful BI strategy is to recognize the need to facilitate the participation of every user, acknowledging that their role and their analytic skill influences the types of reporting applications they receive.

BI tools are designed for power users to write reports after completing significant training, which limits the widespread adoption of these technologies across the enterprise. In contrast, Actuate provides skill-specific, component-based development environments operating over a robust and scalable common infrastructure. This supports a wide range of information producers—from novices to experts—to create highly interactive, instantly usable, Web-based reports, reporting applications and live Excel spreadsheets. Each environment matches the current skills of the user and therefore eliminates the need for training.

Content in Context

Highly adoptable Rich Internet Applications provide consumers interactive, personalized content. These applications support Web 2.0 technologies such as Adobe Flash, Adobe Flex and AJAX in multiple output formats such as print, PDF, Microsoft Office and interactive Web dashboards. Current BI technologies support multiple users and output formats but lack an RIA-ready development platform background, which limits their growth. Such technologies suffer from the lack of flexibility and creativity required to create RIAs because they lack a programming environment, reusable components, scalability and multi-project support.

Similarly deficient are RIA-ready platforms built purely on Web 2.0 technologies that lack a common platform and infrastructure. Such applications offer limited information delivery, report layouts, ad-hoc report development and interactive viewing capabilities. This lack of BI background and technology creates applications that are inflexible; they do not respond quickly to change requirements and technology.

Combining the best of both implementations, Actuate delivers a reusable framework built on an open source, common, unified application platform with an infrastructure that allows customers to build applications that are highly interactive, reusable and adaptable. Actuates applications change as users need.

Dependable, Robust Performance

As mission-critical information applications become successful and highly adopted, organizations must expand their use for larger user populations. Dependability and high performance become crucial business requirements at this stage. While BI tools can provide respectable response rates for their small audiences, Actuate iServer delivers high performance to any size community of employees, customers and partners using information applications. This requirement is particularly crucial in external applications such as information and customer service portals for which users have extremely high performance expectations.

High Availability

Since information applications serve all users in an enterprise with mission-critical information, the platform should be architected so that it is dependable, easy to manage, has 24x7 availability and no single point of failure. Traditional BI technologies are designed for nine-to-five research and analysis functions and therefore lack the industrial-strength architecture that delivers high availability. In stark contrast, Actuate iServer offers load-balanced, J2EE server clusters with no single point of failure, and failover safeguards to ensure user requests are always routed to an available server with the lightest computing load.

Predictable, Linear Scalability

A cost-effective solution enables organizations to add server hardware and enjoy a proportional increase in the size of the user community they can serve while maintaining acceptable performance. While Actuate's clustered-server J2EE architecture supports near-linear scalability for enterprise-wide application deployment, traditional BI technologies support only small user audiences and lose regularly in scalability benchmarks. Actuate deployments can scale at the presentation (iPortal), generation (iServer) and storage (iServerExpress) areas, independently, based on system performance requirements. Actuate is the only vendor to provide comprehensive disclosure of all benchmarking processes, results and conclusions.

Comprehensive Data Access

An information application solution must be able to access a variety of real-time data sources including relational databases, enterprise applications, flat files and legacy systems. Traditional BI technologies are built around data warehouse projects, which add ever-evolving scope, ETL complexities and storage of non-real-time data. Actuate accesses a wide variety of real-time enterprise data sources via its Information Objects metadata and EII technology. The use of Information Objects is optional, not required, and can be cached to protect source systems from query impact.

Language and Localization

As Web deployment extends the audience for information applications across international boundaries, support for local languages, currencies and syntax becomes crucial. Actuate's built-in Unicode and localization support allows organizations to develop a report once for any number of languages and countries.

Flexible, Open Source Alternative

Open-source strategies have become an important part of the development strategies of many large organizations. The Eclipse Foundation leads the way with 65% of organizations claiming use or awareness of Eclipse as an open-source solution, more than three times any other alternative. Actuate remains the only reporting software vendor with an open-source strategy, with over two million downloads of BIRT for developing Web reports. Actuate also offers BIRT-based commercial products for Web, ad-hoc and collaborative reporting.

Collaborative Reporting Architecture

The Actuate Collaborative Reporting Architecture blends the open technologies from the BIRT project with the scalability, performance and reliability of the iServer and the interactivity of AJAX (Asynchronous JavaScript and XML) into a BI environment never before available. The result is dynamic, interactive enterprise reports for any type of deployment and an ad-hoc web reporting environment that allows end users and IT to collaborate and iterate on report definitions, effortlessly evolve report designs, and dynamically craft interactive Web reports. This effectively brings both open source technology and principles such as participation, iterative development and modularity to work inside the enterprise to drive information adoption and corporate performance.

No other vendor offers collaborative reporting of both report content and report designs across interactive customization environments that are matched to user skills. Only Actuate provides RIAs that facilitate this collaboration, with products ranging from Interactive Viewing to BusinessReportStudio to BIRT report development

Integrated Performance Management

Rich Information Applications integrated with a performance management strategy helps high-performing organizations improve decision making at all levels by ensuring better operational performance and execution.

BI vendors offer limited integration between Business Intelligence and performance management products, which leads to longer implementation cycles and higher maintenance costs. In contrast, Actuate's packaged performance management suite can be deployed quickly and economically to bring scorecarding and activity management capabilities to market leading Information Applications.

Actuate's performance management suite shares a common infrastructure with all other Actuate products and supports "drill through" to operational data for root cause analysis. This allows customers to further extend the value of their information applications while supporting any performance management methodology such as balanced scorecarding, Malcolm Baldrige, Six Sigma etc.

Lowest Total Cost of Ownership

A successful information application can meet the growing needs of users while being deployed easily, effectively and economically. Traditional BI technologies use proprietary metadata and data-warehousing which contributes substantially to setup and maintenance costs. Such applications offer limited component reusability and data integration and often scale poorly. This adds further to the cost of building an information application, especially as requirements change and consumer needs grow.

Actuate's RIA-ready platform supports output formats such as print, PDF, Microsoft Office and interactive Web pages in environments that incur zero training costs. The optional use of metadata allows customers the fastest possible time to market with the lowest setup costs. Collaborative reporting reduces the quantity of reports that need to be created while

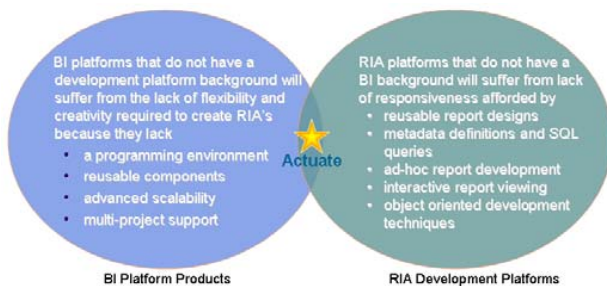
meeting the demands of every user. Reusability across all objects, Services Oriented Architecture (SOA) compatible API's and easy data integration lower the total cost of implementing and maintaining a Rich Information Application.

BI is Adopted 100% When Delivered as a Rich Internet Application

Actuate breaks down the barriers to adoption by providing users with personalized and interactive content accessible from a single, intuitive interface.

Collaborative reporting receives a buy-in from every user, from the open source application developer to the business and power user to the casual end user. Each user works in a zero-training environment to create the most functional report designs, leading to higher adoption.

Actuate applications support a variety of presentation styles from brochure-quality documents to spreadsheets, to dashboards and simple data-driven Web pages. With limitless data presentation formats and integration possibilities, Actuates Rich Internet Application-ready platform leads to 100% user adoption across the enterprise.



Why Actuate for Rich Internet Applications?

- Brochure quality reporting, interactive web reporting, spreadsheet reporting and an integrated performance management suite, built over an open robust rich internet application ready infrastructure
- Zero training skill specific report authoring environments for every user
- Web 2.0 ready development platform with programmability, reusable components, advanced scalability and multi-project support
- Open source BIRT based technology that integrates into the existing product line
- Expanding developer base and community support from the Eclipse foundation and BIRT community website
- Proven solution in the investment management community for use by clients and client managers
- Support for multiple output formats such as print, PDF, Microsoft Office and interactive Web dashboards
- Only vendor with scalable server generated spreadsheets through SmartSheet security
- Excellent solution for large, high scalable, secure reporting applications
- Integrated performance management and dashboarding
- Actuate metadata is optional, not required and supports caching to protect source systems
- Multi-project support platform
- Built-in Unicode and localization support
- Actuate has the background in Business Intelligence as well as the RIA-ready development environment required to create flexible, responsive Rich Internet Applications