# Data Warehouse and Business Intelligence Strategy

Readiness Assessment and Strategy Prioritization projects are appropriate both for organizations embarking on their initial data warehouse/business intelligence (DW/BI) effort and those with a mature DW/BI environment.

If this is your initial foray into data warehousing and business intelligence, you want to start off on the right foot. NipponITS Team participates in the early planning stages to evaluate your organization’s readiness to launch a DW/BI initiative and develop an effective strategy for moving forward. We work with management to identify a high-priority, manageable initial scope, develop justification, and establish a roadmap for subsequent phases. The readiness deliverable summarizes our findings and specific recommendations.

If you have a mature DW/BI environment, an assessment engagement will identify opportunities to grow and enhance your capabilities. NipponITS Team will work with your organization to evaluate your current environment, assess your methodology and strategy, and ensure your organization’s DW/BI capabilities align with the business’s strategies and requirements. Our goal is to formulate a business-driven plan for on-going investments in your DW/BI environment. The assessment analysis will identify critical gaps, needs and recommended actions.

Regardless of the maturity of your DW/BI environment, the goals and objectives for an assessment/strategy project include:

* Understand the high priority business requirements surrounding the organization’s reporting and analytic needs.
* Conduct a high level review of the data and data architecture to determine its suitability for supporting the identified requirements.
* Derive a roadmap based on the data realities and business priorities to assure the DW/BI environment will meet the organization’s ongoing and future reporting and analytic needs.

Assessment/strategy projects typically include the following activities:

* Interview key business and IT sponsors and stakeholders.
* Analyze critical business requirements, executive commitment, and fundamental technical issues.
* Facilitate a management session to review findings, reach consensus on priorities, and secure commitment to a roadmap.
* Recommend an overall strategy for delivering enhanced DW/BI capabilities, including overall methodology, project scope, and data architecture.

**Business requirements**

Aligning the data warehouse/business intelligence (DW/BI) environment with the business’s requirements is absolutely critical to a successful initiative. Period. Best-of-breed tools or sophisticated designs won’t salvage a DW/BI project that fails to focus on the business. The business’s requirements impact almost every decision made during the course of a DW/BI implementation.

Our methodology is very business focused. Nippon ITS team interviews key business management and knowledge workers to understand their business objectives, analytic requirements and associated potential business impact, and project success criteria. In addition, we conduct data discovery interviews with IT representatives knowledgeable about the key source systems to ensure that appropriate, feasible boundaries are established early in the process. Upon completion of the interview process, Nippon ITS team assimilates and analyzes the interview results. The findings are then presented to the appropriate stakeholders to validate the results, ensure consensus on the vision, and establish future priorities.

NipponITS team’s requirements deliverable typically covers the following topics:

* critical business and analytic requirements
* feasibility of existing systems and data to support the capabilities required
* preliminary data warehouse bus architecture with common business dimensions
* initial project success criteria
* Key issues/risks with tactical and strategic recommendations.
* Dimensional Modeling

The goal of a data warehouse and business intelligence (DW/BI) solution is to publish the “right” data and make it easily accessible to decision-makers. Successful DW/BI implementations rest on the foundation of a dimensional model to deliver both ease-of-use and query performance.

The effective dimensional models reflect the natural performance measurements and descriptive attributes of a business. They survive reorganizations, acquisitions, and other business changes, if designed properly. Most importantly, business partners will find a well-designed dimensional model intuitive because it mirrors the way they think about the business, not the way a data modeler has normalized the organization’s data. Dimensional models are critical to enabling the business to leverage the organization’s valuable information assets.

Nippon ITS Team often engages in a Dimensional Model Design project immediately following a Business Requirements effort. In other cases, the client may have independently completed the requirements analysis process. Nippon ITS consultants work closely with key business liaisons and IT professionals to facilitate the design of flexible dimensional models through a series of joint design workshops. The process results in a design specification describing the fact and dimension tables and associated columns, along with sample values, slowly changing dimension policies, and required business rules transformations, where appropriate. The resulting logical data model is the starting point for the physical design, source to target mapping, and ETL efforts that will follow. The model will be independent of database platform and/or tool idiosyncrasies.

* Dimensional Model Design Review
* Some organizations have already invested a significant effort into gathering requirements and developing a preliminary schema, but require additional guidance before completing and implementing the model. You can leverage the Nippon ITS’s dimensional modelling experience by engaging us in an onsite design review.
* Typically, a Nippon ITS consultant will make a two day onsite visit. Prior to the onsite visit, the consultant will review background documentation such as the project charter and scope, business requirements, and existing schema. In addition, we ask the client to provide a list of questions, issues and/or concerns related to the dimensional data models. During the onsite visit, the Nippon ITS consultant will facilitate discussion of the client’s modelling questions and issues and provide feedback regarding Nippon ITS’s review of the dimensional models.
* While each client engagement is different, topics may include
  + - dimensional modelling best practices,
    - Nippon ITS’s identified design issues,
    - client identified design issues,
    - trade-offs of alternative design options,
    - Data warehouse architecture alternatives.
* Most clients take detailed notes during the onsite visit and develop written documentation summarizing the key learnings and recommendations resulting from the design review. Nippon ITS will then review and comment on this summary document. Alternately, the Nippon ITS consultant can provide a written summary for an additional fee.
* A typical design review project consisting of the background materials and existing schema review, the two day onsite session, and review of the written summary document is provided for a fixed amount plus associated travel and living expenses.
* Data Warehouse and Business Intelligence Project Review
* Project checkpoint reviews are appropriate whether you’re in the midst of an initial implementation or sustaining a mature data warehouse/business intelligence (DW/BI) environment. Checkpoints allow you to bring the Nippon ITS’s knowledge and experience to bear on your project.
* Depending on your requirements and the maturity of your initiative, project checkpoint reviews typically focus on three critical aspects of your environment—organization, usage, and data. Reviews are invaluable to project teams in terms of both confirmation and/or redirection.
* During a focused review engagement, a Nippon ITS consultant typically makes a two day onsite visit. Prior to the onsite visit, the consultant will review background documentation such as the project charter and scope, business requirements, and existing schema. In addition, we ask the client to provide a list of questions, issues and/or concerns related to the project. During the onsite meeting, the Nippon ITS consultant will facilitate discussions of the client’s questions and issues and provide feedback regarding Nippon ITS’s review of your DW/BI environment.
* Most clients take detailed notes during the onsite visit and develop written documentation summarizing the key learnings and recommendations resulting from the checkpoint review. Nippon ITS will then review and comment on this summary document. Alternately, the Nippon ITS consultant can provide a written summary for an additional fee.
* A typical checkpoint review project consisting of the background materials review, two day onsite session, and review of the written summary document is provided for a fixed bid amount plus associated travel and living expenses.