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Steps from Static Dashboards to Intelligent Insights

How to power up your data with smart analytics

In the beginning, there was raw data. Then dashboards came along, and they were OK. Business users had at their fingertips the information they needed, all in one place, presented in pretty, technicolor graphs and charts.

But static dashboards aren't enough.

The first problem with those static dashboards is they aren't action-oriented. Employees can see the information, but they're on their own to figure out what to do with it. The second problem is they lack "stickiness." They just aren't relevant to the day-to-day business activities, so they're easy to ignore.

"Despite their promise," The Eckerson Group stated in a recent white paper, "few dashboards have transformed organizations and delivered the sustained productivity gains and profits that business leaders envisioned."

It's time for a new approach — smart analytics. These applications leverage advances in big data, machine learning, mobile technologies, and graphic interface design to help users approach decisions with greater accuracy, effectiveness, and timeliness. Unlike static dashboards, smart analytics are role-based, intelligent, contextual, action-oriented, and integrated into the processes and applications that run the business.

Making the transition from dashboards to smart analytics isn't as simple as adding some bells and whistles to your current platform. It's an evolutionary journey made up of three phases: enable, embed, and engage.



PHASE 1: Enable

In the first phase of the transition to smart analytics, the objective is to build a strong data foundation that can support a dynamic and rapidly evolving business environment. It's difficult to build a smart analytics platform if your data isn't accurate, consistent, or timely, or if you don't have a solid data governance system in place.

Phase 1 is all about building a foundation for generating trustworthy and consistent data by addressing two factors: the analytics platform and the business intelligence program.

Analytics Platform

Because smart analytics are role-based, you'll need an analytics platform that meets the needs of all types of business users. Casual users will need compelling, action-oriented reports and dashboards, while "power users" will need self-service exploration and report creation features. And don't forget the data scientists, who will need the ability to create new data sets and analytic models using various programming languages.

Business Intelligence (BI) Program

Smart analytics applications don't replace BI platforms; they move BI from simply looking into the past to empowering users in making decisions and taking action to improve the business. That's why your BI program is critical in building a strong data foundation for your smart analytics platform.



PHASE 2: Embed

With your foundation in place, the next objective is to integrate data analytics into the fabric of the company. By embedding charts, visualizations, reports, dashboards, and even entire BI tool sets into the tools your teams are already using every day, we dramatically improve the chances of your analytics platform being adopted and used on a regular basis. Completing Phase 2 involves two vital tasks: gathering business requirements and bringing in — or building — a development team.

Map Out Business Requirements

Learn all you can about the specific people, processes, and pain points that your smart analytics app will impact. Remember, you're not just delivering data any more: you're using it to streamline business workflows, giving users the information they need, when they need it, to take beneficial actions. Bring in technology experts with industry expertise to help you research how business users get work done and how data can expedite the process.

Build Your Development Team

Phase 2 is also where your endeavor evolves from "user-centric" to "developer-centric." Engage solution architects and developers who can not only write code, but also use application programming interfaces (APIs) to build custom analytics applications.



PHASE 3: Engage

Phase 3 is where it all comes together to produce a smart analytics application that's sticky, action-oriented, and engaging. The solution architects and developers you engaged in Phase 2 will use the information they gathered to automate actions and build highly tailored, actionable applications that combine data, analytics, and transactions. Now you'll also bring in graphic user interface designers to create a look, feel, and flow that make the app both visually appealing and easy to use.

Also remember that your organization has scores of additional users who could benefit from highly tailored, workflow-oriented analytics applications. Establish a permanent team to build, enhance, and support smart analytics applications for a wider audience.

As static dashboards give way to smart analytics, organizations must take a proactive approach to giving users apps that are role-based, intelligent, contextual, action-oriented, and integrated into their daily workflows. By following the three-phase approach of "enable, embed, and engage," you can complete the evolution from "static to smart" and put in place teams and processes to ensure that data continues to serve the needs of business users — today, tomorrow, and for years to come.



About GoodData

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The GoodData advantage

Business:

1. One platform for all: internal teams, client companies, external partners
2. Self-service visualization for business users
3. Your own branding
4. Predictable pricing to suit your business, no pay-per-user
5. The highest data privacy and security certifications

Technical:

1. Automated scaling to different departments and companies
2. Embedded dashboards in your application or software product
3. Streamlined multi-tenant change management
4. Abundant data-source options
5. Fully hosted or deployed as a container in your private or public cloud (on premises)