

## ABOVE THE NOISE

# You've got to sweat the small stuff

In this economy, metrics offer a reality check that's crucial for long-term success **KATE MCLUCAS**



ONE OF THE important lessons learned from the dot-com boom and bust is how important metrics are to business, generally, and to technology, specifically. During those days of gluttony, measuring venture capital and stock options seemed to outshine measuring success with hard data. But in retrospect, the strategic day-to-day use of metrics would have been invaluable to establishing and managing companies in their infancy.

Companies trying to get through the economic downturn are now realizing that BI (business intelligence) is key to measuring strategic goals and

vital to a company's success.

A quarterly budget update containing surprise fluctuations is no longer acceptable in today's economic climate. Heather Herrald's feature explains that BI can provide daily updates to the executive team, giving them an instant indicator of company health (see "Reality checks," page 38).

Vendors are recognizing the strategic importance of metrics and are rushing to provide solutions. Partnerships between enterprise application and BI solutions vendors are linking key technologies. This is essential for businesses hoping to aggregate key data from multiple departments and reconcile that data.

Contributing Editor David Margulius chimes in with a Test Center Insight about technological hurdles to enterprisewide performance analytics (see "Building toward BPM," page 40). He focuses on the many challenges that vendors will have putting together business process management frameworks.

To discuss business intelligence and the enterprise, join Mike Schroeck of Price-waterhouseCoopers in a live forum on Friday, Sept. 27, at 9 a.m. PDT. You can find the forum at [www.infoworld.com/forums](http://www.infoworld.com/forums).

The Test Center reviews a related business intelligence solution, Brio Metrics Builder 7.0 (see "Visibility boost," page 31). Despite its high price, the product combines ease of use with top customization features. However, Senior Analyst Mario Apicella points out that BI tools are only as effective as the

manager monitoring and analyzing the data.

When transportation is your business, logistic technologies drive your business strategies. This week's CTO feature details CTOs' search for systems that will propel their companies into the lead in an increasingly competitive transportation market (see "Fork in the road," page 42). These solutions — designed to streamline distribution and cut costs — are being provided by a combination of systems development in-house and outsourcing through third parties.

Details are a vital part of our job here at *InfoWorld*. We no longer just focus on words as we provide a weekly print magazine. We also rely on print and online publishing systems — vital technology that ensures content is delivered to our readers as quickly as possible. This fall we are focusing on that technology — what works, what doesn't — and we'll rely on readers to provide feedback. Please let us know what you like and what you don't like about *InfoWorld's* many offerings. You can e-mail me at the address below. Your input will go a long way in ensuring your satisfaction.

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