Challenge
When reports are only able to be generated by the IT Department because of their proximity to the data and the IT Department’s technical proficiency, the personnel that are most familiar with the data are isolated from the process of report generation and interpretation.

Solution
Putting business data in the cloud and providing business intelligence software to help business users generate reports allows those who are most familiar with the data to access it and create reports for their specific needs.

Customized Reports to Suit Your Business Requirements

Every organization has reports they’re required to produce, whether they’re for Sales, Marketing, Accounting, Human Resources, State and Federal Taxes, or something equally important to the operations and functions of the business. The advent of cloud computing has changed things:

• It is possible for more than just the IT Department to determine what reports will be produced.
• Data in the cloud, in a data warehouse, or a data lake, means it is readily available and accessible to the average user, not just to stakeholders.
• Producing reports requires processing power and distribution bandwidth, but you can delegate the processing work to cloud-based servers that can scale up and down as needed.

With this new flexibility, it’s tempting to let everyone jump in and try generating reports. However, it’s probably wiser to invest some time developing a systematic approach to producing reports.

There are two specific types of reports, each with different purposes and for displaying different types of information to different classes of users:

• Scorecards: Useful for managing performance, and can help you evaluate your success and failure against key performance indicators (KPIs) – your business strategy. For example, a scorecard might show your actual sales versus your goal sales and your actual profit versus your goal profit.
• Dashboards: Show performance information, often in real-time. They also allow you to view multiple reports at once, which allows for easy comparison of disparate data sets in one place. A dashboard is designed to show the current status of your business. For example, it might show the number of available products for sale and how that number has changed over a specific period of time.
Setting Up for Effective Reporting

Your IT Department has the option to allow any user to produce reports of their own. Answering a few key questions can help your organization identify their priorities for producing both standard and customizable report and prevent duplication and unnecessary processing time:

- Does your BI software allow users create their own reports? If not, you may need to acquire new software to meet the demand.
- What are the “standard reports” that you’re planning to provide to your stakeholders? What reporting capabilities are they expecting to have made available to them?
- Will your users need to be able to adjust the content of the standard reports by adding data specific to each department?
- At what interval should business data be refreshed to coincide with report creation or decision points in the business cycle?
  - Real-time updates
  - Several times per hour
  - Hourly updates

One scenario that your IT Department might encounter is the need for stakeholders of strategic projects to have access to reports that can help them make decisions. Consider offering a scorecard report option that helps them make strategic decisions. A scorecard allows you to compare the performance of your business against your KPIs.

Another scenario that you might want to build into your reporting is the ability to measure the performance of a particular aspect of your business over time. A dashboard allows you to evaluate the performance of one or more aspects of your business over time.

Report Generation that Supports You and Your Stakeholders

Once you’ve successfully connected the data that your stakeholders require to your business intelligence software, and you’ve tuned the processing of the data so that it’s available to be assembled into reports, then the following strategy can help you meet the needs of your users:

Create standard reports and methods for subscribing to them.

How are you distributing standard reports that you’re currently providing? Consider setting up a way for users to select the reports that are important to them through a subscription process. That way, you don’t waste bandwidth distributing reports that recipients are not reading.

Provide scorecards to help your users evaluate progress against their KPIs.

Allow your users to create scorecards with the data that will help them evaluate their KPIs. Different groups of users might measure performance against their KPIs with different data, so allows users to choose the data with which to evaluate their KPIs.
Make reports available on mobile devices as well as laptops and desktops.

Modern BI software can provide web-based reports that can be viewed on mobile devices such as phones and tablets. With responsive layouts, your stakeholders don’t have to wait until they get to a laptop or desktop machine to get the business insights that will help them at a critical moment, such as in a meeting or on a sales call.

In Conclusion

Customizable and mobile reports can make a significant difference in business actions and decision-making when the people who need data have access to it and can adjust the reports to suit their needs. Scorecards can help you measure the performance of your business by comparing the performance of your business against your KPIs. This information can be of great use to your strategic decision makers. Dashboards can help you evaluate the performance of aspects of your business over time.

AWS Marketplace has the BI software you need to put effective report generation in place in your business. Visit http://aws.amazon.com/mp/reporting for more information.

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