

LIMITED RELEASE
[GENERAL RELEASE DATE: 01 DEC 2009]

Contact:

David Harmer ACA
Design Bi Sàrl
Route du Boiron 29,
1260 Nyon,
Switzerland
Phone: +41 (0)788 10 27 01

<http://www.designbi.com>
david.harmer@designbi.com

Software company wants to rescue stressed-out accountants

LONDON, England – 18 Nov 2009

Under pressure from the recession, accountants are being asked to provide better information, provide it faster, and yet do so at the same or less cost. No wonder a global survey by Robert Half International reports increased stress in 39% of their finance respondents (49% in the US).

Software company Design Bi Limited says its business intelligence software addresses the most common reasons why accountants and back office staff are spending long hours “crunching the numbers”, being:

Reason 1: Finance staff often have to deal with the “data silo” problem. According to Design Bi, having the best operational systems at their disposal can actually cause more work for the accountants not less. For example, having the best billing, customer relationship management and credit rating systems now means that customer information is straddling three systems and linking it is not always going to be easy.

Unfortunately, reporting tools alone will not necessarily help bring the data together. These can usually only report what is “there”, and “there” is many places not one. Taking the example above, if a company has a key indicator of aged debt stratified by customer credit-rating, it’s often the accounting staff that has to do the work to get the information together to present to managers.

Design Bi say their system solves the problem by providing a set of tools which moves data from various sources (databases, files, or even spreadsheets) to a single data warehouse store structured in the best way for reporting. Normally a highly technical task, Design Bi says their system is capable of being used by business people as well as IT experts.

Reason2: Having to make sense of large volumes of unstructured data. It is common to see finance staff locked into a costly and time-consuming cycle of hand crafting reports, adding some calculation rules, and some structure simply so that the data can be presented back to managers in an acceptable or understandable format.

Design Bi has developed a way of adding external structures (e.g. team responsibility hierarchies) to unstructured data to give structure where none exists in the source data. The Design Bi system also contains web- and windows-based analysis & reporting tools and dashboards to make the large data sets much easier to visualise.

Reason 3: “The data is there but I can’t get at it”. Most operational systems are built using relational database technology, which is an ideal choice for ensuring the integrity of data but is not great for reporting. The data may well be there but IT departments will often need to prevent finance users from having free reign to run queries and reports to find it because the performance of operational systems would degrade if they were to do so.

Finance staff often resort to having to maintain summary information in spreadsheets, costing them yet more time.

Design Bi claim their software makes building a data warehouse store, the ideal structure for holding lots of data, very easy and they supply a suitable database for those that need one. It means no more analysis for the accountants because the data is always “there”.

Reason 4 – Sharing the information. Producing reports, distributing them and keeping track of versions, and who has what is time-consuming.

Design Bi have developed web-based reports and dashboards alongside the windows versions so that the report production process becomes redundant. Their reports are always “on”, shared appropriately, updated with data from source systems, and they do not need to be distributed.

Convinced of the potential for the kind of technology developed by Design Bi, last October the UK’s Chartered Institute of Management Accountants urged its members to be alert to the possibilities: *“BI could help to release accountants from the reporting cycle to provide the decision support expected by progressive businesses.”*

According to Managing Director and Chartered Accountant David Harmer: *“I see lots of companies and it’s the same story everywhere – teams of people downloading data into spreadsheets, adding rules, and presenting it back to managers in an acceptable form. Then repeating the process the next month. We knew reporting tools alone would not help. There had to be a better way.”*

That “better way” is, of course, the business intelligence/OLAP database supported by OLAP reporting tools, a market which has some large well-known players, currently consolidating their acquisitions. DesignBi say that as a smaller company it has the advantage of not having to spend its time and money attempting to integrate systems built with different technologies.

DesignBi can be encouraged by the independent Gartner group, who say: *“In the main, innovation in BI platforms is being driven by independents.”*

and

“...there is no correlation between the size of a vendor (in either revenue or staff terms) and the level of satisfaction or the return on investment delivered with a BI platform implemented. Formerly, while the market was dominated by independent pure-play BI firms, size was an important indicator as to capability; now, this isn’t the case - a \$300 million revenue BI specialist may well (and often does) out-deliver a more broad-based vendor many times its size.”

David Harmer is a Chartered Accountant specialising in software development with over 20 years’ experience of the finance sector. He is not an expert on accountants’ stress-levels, but he does know about business intelligence software.

Notes for editors

CIMA quote is from page 21 of “Improving decision making in organisations – Unlocking business intelligence” (obtainable from www.cimaglobal.com). The Gartner quotes are from their 2009 Business Intelligence report.

For information: <http://www.designbi.com> (see “resources page”) or

Contact: david.harmer@designbi.com

###