

Business Performance Management Software Buyer's Guide

The table starting on page 28 lists major BPM vendors. It provides a company profile and information about the functionality of each vendor's market offering.

The vendors are divided into four categories: tools vendors, application vendors, ERP vendors and newer vendors. Tools vendors focus more on technical components that a client's developers can use to build a custom BPM solution. Application vendors often utilize these components in building packages with an end-user-oriented interface. Most ERP vendors started with transactional systems, but they have begun to offer analytics capabilities on the transactional systems' data. Newer vendors are listed separately because many of these companies have taken a fresh approach to challenges identified by the more mature players.

Tools Vendors

This group encompasses many strong products. Business Objects is seen as a leader in report-and-query tools. Informatica is almost synonymous with extract, transform and load (ETL) functionality. Microsoft has been coming on strong lately and has a fairly complete set of tools, including one of the best OLAP engines.

These vendors' products tend to be less end-user-focused than packaged applications, so implementations require a good deal of IT involvement. Some tools vendors have ventured into the application space and now offer their own prebuilt analytics packages. It is still early for these applications, as they do not yet comprise a significant part of the vendors' business.

Application Vendors

These companies are the powerhouses of the space. They have been creating this type of software since before it was called BPM. Their products are relatively mature (except for the newer Web versions), and they have a large customer base.

Within this list are a few hybrid tools/application vendors such as Hyperion and Cognos — both of which sell solid, nearly complete packaged offerings but also produce tools for custom-built solutions.

Adaytum is narrowly focused on budgeting (from a BPM perspective) but compensates for it with deep functionality and strong modeling capabilities. SRC is known for offering strong salary planning and line item detail.

Something to watch out for: Some of the full BPM suites available are made up of several products that, while presented by the vendor as a unified whole, may require integration work after purchase.

ERP Vendors

This group consists of the large players that many companies rely on for their transactional financial systems. Moving into BPM is a logical extension for these vendors, since they are the home of much of the source data for performance management systems. However, some of these systems are not good at working with data from outside their own ERP database. SAP may be an exception because it has a strong multisource portal capability that grew out of the acquisition of TopTier.

PeopleSoft has a fairly complete set of analytics modules. And Microsoft Great

Plains Business Solutions offers a range of financial and analysis capabilities that target the small to midsize enterprise. But because BPM is not the core business of these vendors, their investment in it may change over time.

Newer Vendors

This category includes only companies that have been in the market five years or less. As a group, they tend to be the most innovative BPM vendors, introducing new technologies and business models before the more established players do. They also tend to be more flexible in structuring and pricing deals. They generally provide more personal customer service, as they are trying to grow their reference base. And many are moving toward industry-focused offerings.

OutlookSoft was one of the first vendors to deliver a unified Web-based BPM suite. Closedloop Solutions aims its product at fast-moving high-tech companies. Inea's offering is designed specifically for the financial services industry.

The newer vendors have a lot to offer, but they typically have fewer references, a smaller staff and less of a global presence than their competitors.

Today more vendors are providing better choices in the BPM space than ever before. The first step to selecting the right vendor is to clarify your organization's business requirements. Before you start shopping, take advantage of the online BPM needs assessment available courtesy of **BPM Partners Inc.** (see page 23).

Key to Buyer's Guide Table

OLAP (online analytical processing): This multidimensional database (or data cube) technology provides a variety of perspectives — i.e., slicing and dicing — of data.

Report & Query: These tools provide the ability to easily retrieve, manipulate and report on data stored in a database or data cube.

ETL (extract, transform and load): This software enables users to move, map and convert data from a source system to the BPM system.

Analytics: Analysis of a particular type of data (e.g., customer information) is built into the system.

Budgeting: The product offers top-down and bottom-up budgeting, as well as planning and forecasting.

Consolidation: The software sums data from multiple ledgers, with currency conversion and intercompany eliminations as needed.

Metrics: The system can track key performance indicators using data from multiple sources.

Portal/Dashboard: The software interface is a simple, unified delivery vehicle for information; it can be a Web page on which reports are published or an executive dashboard.

Global Support: The vendor has a presence (direct or indirect) in most major business centers around the world.

Large Reference Base: More than 100 clients are successfully using this vendor's products.

BUYER'S GUIDE

This buyer's guide was prepared by BPM Partners Inc., a professional services firm headquartered in Stamford, Conn., that focuses on business performance management. To conduct additional research on these vendors, go to www.bmpartners.com, and navigate to the BPM Central page. For assistance with vendor selection and implementation, contact BPM Partners at services@bmpartners.com.

Components			Capabilities					Profile		Web Site	Stock Symbol	Comments
OLAP	Report & Query	ETL	Analytics	Budgeting	Consolidation	Metrics	Portal/Dashboard	Global Support	Large Reference Base			

TOOLS VENDORS

Alphablox		○							○	www.alphablox.com	Private	Alphablox provides powerful tools to build custom analytics applications. Developers and analysts can build applications to perform virtually any analytic function across the enterprise, accessing data from a variety of data sources and delivering it over the Web. This is a "complete build" solution.
Applix	○	○		○	○				○	www.applix.com	APLX	The iTM1 OLAP engine was already a proven contender with its unique on-the-fly calculation capabilities when it was acquired by Applix in the mid-90s. Applix is now expanding into core applications such as planning.
Brio Software		○		○			○	○	○	www.brio.com	BRIO	Brio focuses on ease of use. The company is working hard to grow beyond its report-and-query roots and catch up to the bigger players.
Business Objects		○	○	○			○	○	○	www.businessobjects.com	BOBJ	The leader in report and query, Business Objects recently announced plans to focus more on collaboration. This is a well-respected, financially sound company.
Computer Associates	○	○	○	○			○	○	○	www.ca.com	CA	Computer Associates is vying to participate in this space and sees its CleverPath portal and strong predictive analytics as a way to make a name for itself in BPM.
Informatica		○	○	○			○	○	○	www.informatica.com	INFA	The leader in ETL, Informatica is gaining some traction and recognition for its analytics, although year-on-year revenue growth is flat.
Microsoft	○	○	○				○	○	○	www.microsoft.com	MSFT	MS Analysis Services is a top OLAP engine and is very cost-effective. Microsoft offers a nearly complete set of tools for those looking to build their own solution.
MicroStrategy	○	○		○			○	○	○	www.microstrategy.com	MSTR	Known for its highly flexible analysis and reporting, MicroStrategy has a strong partner network delivering numerous applications built on its platform. Accounting woes and "change the world" Internet strategy are behind the company.

APPLICATION VENDORS

Acorn Systems				○	○		○	○	○	www.acornsys.com	Private	Acorn packages focus on activity-based costing and profit management. They include built-in "connectors" for leading business intelligence/BPM vendors and offer 300 standard reports out of the box. The solution is highly scalable but offers only bottom-up budgeting at this time.
Adaytum				○	○				○	www.adaytum.com	Private	Adaytum software can perform complex modeling and analysis and is often cited as a strong number two behind Hyperion for budgeting. Because of this rich functionality, implementations can be complex. The company has a strong relationship with Accenture.
Armstrong Laing Group					○				○	www.armstronglaing.com	Private	Armstrong Laing focuses on predictive planning and activity-based management. Its software integrates with Applix (iTMI), Cognos and Hyperion. Armstrong Laing has industry depth in numerous verticals.
Business Engine					○				○	www.businessengine.com	Private	This vendor focuses on project and resource management. Its software features tight integration with MS Project; it is a very specialized application.
Business Matters Inc.					○					www.bmmatters.com	Private	The product is geared toward small companies looking for a fast-start business modeling solution. It is not highly customizable but is very low-cost. Still, it lacks the flexibility of other similarly priced packages.

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Cartesis				○	○	○	○	○	○	www.cartesis.com	Private	Cartesis provides 40 true analytics dimensions, which is more than most other vendors can handle. Cartesis is big in Europe; its headquarters are in Paris.
Centage				○						www.centage.com	Private	The Budget Maestro product is based on MS SQL Server. Very low-cost entry point for small companies ready to graduate from spreadsheets.
Cognos	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	www.cognos.com	COGN	Cognos has a strong new focus on metrics management. The company has long been a leading tools provider, but now has a renewed emphasis on applications.
Comshare				○	○	○	○	○	○	www.comshare.com	CSRE	Partnered with Microsoft for performance management, Comshare has developed particularly strong budgeting capabilities. This company has been around a long time and is one of the veterans of the space.
CorVu			○			○	○	○	○	www.corvu.com	CRVU	CorVu's focus is on the Balanced Scorecard, information analysis, information delivery and risk management solutions through a powerful suite of graphical tools. It includes built-in tools to access Essbase and MS OLAP. CorVu also offers pre-built apps for many ERP systems.
Frango				○	○			○	○	www.frango.com	FRAN (Stockholm Stock Exchange)	Frango offers solid consolidation, budgeting, planning and reporting functionality. The global company is headquartered in Sweden; Europe is its major market.
FRx Software Corp.			○	○	○			○	○	www.frxsoftware.com	MSFT	FRx is the financial analytics and budgeting arm of Microsoft Great Plains Business Solutions. Its easy-to-use solutions are targeted at small to midsize companies and integrate with a wide variety of transactional systems.
Hyperion Solutions	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	www.hyperion.com	HYSL	The long-term leader in financial analytics, Hyperion is growing again three-plus years after the merger of Hyperion Software and Arbor Software. It offers strong consolidation and budgeting applications and a powerful Essbase OLAP engine. To achieve a full BPM solution, clients may need to purchase and integrate multiple products.
KCI Computing				○	○	○				www.kcicorp.com	Private	KCI's Control product uses an Excel front end to dynamically deliver data from multiple sources. It utilizes central data repositories from numerous database vendors, including DB2/400. This is a U.S.-based company with minimal international presence.
Longview Solutions				○	○					www.longview.com	Private	Longview supports Oracle or SQL Server back ends and offers Excel integration and nomadic (offline) capabilities. This is one of the quieter, slower-growth companies in the space.
Prophix Software				○				○		www.prophix.com	Private	Prophix is a smaller company based in Canada. It offers a low-price, basic budgeting and reporting application using an OLAP back end. International sales and service are handled through distributors. Prophix offers a low entry point for midsize companies.
SAS Institute Inc.		○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	www.sas.com	Private	The SAS consolidation and reporting application offers Web-based data delivery, and both simple and complex cost allocation intelligence are built-in. It makes budget administration simple through alerts that show outstanding submissions, versions and iterations. SAS also offers a number of industry-specific applications.
SRC Software				○	○	○		○	○	www.srcsoftware.com	Private	SRC is one of the best for detailed salary planning. It's a small, growing company with a focus on customer support.

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ERP VENDORS

Coda				○	○	○	○	○	○	www.coda.com	CSY (London Stock Exchange)	Coda is headquartered in the U.K. Its client has no footprint and offers easy integration with external systems, so it's well-suited to handle global financial accounting and reporting regulations.
Lawson Software				○	○	○	○	○	○	www.lawson.com	LWSN	Lawson makes a full suite of BPM products. It offers unique, out-of-the-box creation of metric-specific OLAP datamarts for ease of analysis. Lawson also resells Hyperion products for budget and consolidation.
Microsoft Great Plains Business Solutions		○				○	○		○	www.greatplains.com	MSFT	Great Plains (now part of Microsoft) solutions are targeted at small to midsize companies and are generally sold through value-added resellers. Its offerings are integrated with FRx products, which are also part of the MS Great Plains family. ProClarity is used for report and query.
Oracle	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	www.oracle.com	ORCL	Oracle recently integrated OLAP with its relational database. Although the company offers a complete solution, its budgeting approach is still not as robust as dedicated best-of-breed solutions.
PeopleSoft				○	○	○	○	○	○	www.peoplesoft.com	PSFT	PeopleSoft has a wide range of analytics modules and is the logical choice for companies that have standardized on PeopleSoft.
SAP				○	○	○	○	○	○	www.sap.com	SAP	SAP incorporates TopTier portal capabilities. The range of offerings and capabilities from SAP is tremendous, yet can be overwhelming for many companies.

NEWER VENDORS

Closedloop Solutions				○	○					www.closedloop.com	Private	Closedloop targets high-tech companies and is very narrowly focused on budgeting, forecasting and related analytics.
Elevon					○		○	○		www.elevon.cc	ELVN	Elevon focuses on collaborative commerce and knowledge management using a Microsoft platform. The product and the company are both new, although much of the management team came from Walker Interactive Systems.
Inea					○	○	○			www.ineacorp.com	Private	Customized for financial services, this Canadian company is making a major push in the United States.
NewEnergy				○	○	○	○		○	www.impactfp.com	SI	Impact is a product of NewEnergy, recently acquired by Siemens. The product has been on the market for about two years, but the company has years of experience building custom applications. Budgeting, planning, forecasting and consolidation are built on the Poet (object-oriented) database.
OutlookSoft				○	○	○	○	○		www.outlooksoft.com	Private	OutlookSoft offers a unified BPM solution that continues to stay one step ahead of the competition, based almost entirely on Microsoft technology. More narrowly focused application vendors may offer more depth of functionality.