

QlikView Puts Facts-Based Performance Metrics Within Reach for More Companies

In brief

Company

The Business Solutions Network

Industry

Enterprise Performance Management

Needs

Affordable business intelligence that would allow more mid-size companies to measure and manage with facts-based business metrics

Solution

QlikView functionality that includes the necessary ETL processes at a price point acceptable to most businesses

Benefits

- Access for more companies to BSN's enterprise performance management solutions
- BSN engagements with multiple subsidiaries of each of the Caribbean's major financial services companies
- Additional business opportunities in the U.S. originating from impressed Caribbean clients

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Jeff Sealy, Co-founder, The Business Solutions Network

Company Background

The Business Solutions Network (BSN), based out of Atlanta with offices in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad, specializes in helping companies throughout the Caribbean improve their business performance. Eighty percent of the company's work for a client can be spent on analyzing business processes, identifying what should be measured as Key Performance Indicators, how data should be extracted, and how often. The last mile or 20% of the effort is devoted to implementing the right tools to obtain metrics that will allow the client to follow BSN's strategy roadmap for higher profitability.

The allure of island hopping around the Caribbean sounds idyllic, but enterprise consulting that relies on transforming a company's operational processes and corporate culture is a heady business in any part of the world. Proven qualifications are required to penetrate the executive suite and persuade that resident to trust his company's success on sweeping institutional changes recommended in a BSN proposal.

BSN co-founder and lead consultant, Jeff Sealy, brings formidable credentials to the job. A former KPMG consultant and CFO within the Shell Oil organization, Sealy's experience, insights, and unbiased approach to identifying enterprise performance weaknesses and remedies work. Financial services companies within the Sagitor and Guardian Holdings Limited groups that serve the Caribbean are among clients for whom Sealy and BSN have been able to effect positive change for more profitable, long-term business performance.

Needs: Powerful BI That Mid-Size Companies Can Afford

Many BSN engagements start with assembling a holistic view of a client's operations through application of the McKinsey 7-S framework Value-Based Management model. "Our business has more to do with business strategy than technical capability," says Sealy. "Business success hinges on properly measuring and managing processes. We help clients to identify what needs to be measured and how, as well as design a framework with which to improve internal processes and ensure accountability. We work directly with CEOs because they control management processes and have the power to change them. We enable a company to manage with facts – versus 'informed opinions' and speculation."



But business runs on its information management systems, which inevitably come into play in every BSN engagement. The “what needs to be measured” is stored on a computer somewhere. Once BSN devises a strategy that identifies a client’s critical success factors, they recommend and implement BI tools for executives to easily extract and view data on performance scorecards.

BSN’s process-oriented approach devotes considerable time to constructing a strategy map and how to drive the right metrics out of it. The firm designs for its clients custom “metric specification forms” to sharpen focus on how each metric is defined, how it is extracted, and how often before actually working with data.

Money does sometimes become an obstacle in the pricing of traditional OLAP business intelligence tools for clients. The capitalization of a large company in the Caribbean is by world standards still a mid-size organization. While a client’s investments in IT infrastructure runs into the millions of dollars, another million or so for an OLAP solution was too often a deal breaker.

“Our clients have the same BI challenges everyone faces. They have already spent a lot of money on best-of-breed apps and various suites, but none talk with each other so you can’t get information you need without spending more.”

Jeff Sealy, Co-founder, The Business Solutions Network

Solution: QlikView World-Class Functionality at an Affordable Price Point

The OLAP price barrier to more business opportunities sent Sealy searching the Internet for alternatives to the BI products BSN was recommending. His primary criteria was functionality that had to include built-in ETL capabilities and pricing that would be more attractive to prospects.

“My initial reaction to QlikView when I first saw it on the Internet was ‘What’s this?’ said Sealy. “Only later after speaking with QlikTech and going to QlikTech’s North America headquarters for training did I realize that online demos only hint at what QlikView can really do. QlikView opens the BI world to companies who otherwise would not be able to afford such powerful functionality.”

Equipped with the new option to recommend QlikView for extracting and viewing the process-driven metrics, BSN began closing deals that otherwise would have been too costly. Their first implementation for a hotel group in Barbados was quickly followed by a series of engagements with the Caribbean’s foremost financial services companies. Among them was the first customer installation anywhere of the 64-bit edition of QlikView in 2004.

“BSN is not a QlikTech reseller. That would compromise our unbiased approach with clients. We inform clients of their options with a variety of products. QlikView has the right functionality at the right price point for a majority of our market, which makes price much less of an obstacle when speaking with CEOs about adopting fact-based metrics to measure and manage enterprise performance.”

Jeff Sealy, Co-founder, The Business Solutions Network



Results: QlikView Successes Bring More Opportunities to BSN

Once BSN began penetrating the subsidiaries of major holding groups with QlikView, and proving successful enterprise performance strategies, the parent companies took notice. Sealy is optimistic they too will be QlikView users in the very near future. Ironically, this trend of seeing business “bubble up” to the top of an organization is the inverse of how BSN approaches goals with individual clients.

“In any company, our applications with QlikView start with scorecards at the corporate level. Engagements are usually a cascading process that can be expanded down through the business units of the client’s organization. Any subsidiary is itself a company and that has been our entry point but, yes, it is ironic to see our brand of enterprise performance management move up an organizational ladder.”

BSN also has sights set on substantial opportunities in the U.S. that are originating from impressed Caribbean clients. Doors are opening and QlikView is making it possible by allowing more companies to access the BSN process for identifying and measuring critical success factors with fact-based metrics.

Best Practices: QlikView on Strategic Content

Since the Internet search for BI products and visit to QlikTech in 2003, BSN has grown to operate with eight consultants now trained on QlikView. Five of them are dedicated to working with the product and training clients on how QlikView is applied to best measure and manage their company’s performance.

According to Sealy, companies generally know they need to do a better job in measuring performance and senior executives want the capability. A BI process must start at the highest level to clearly define objectives and assess how knowing the facts critical to greater business success could change the way things are done. Analysis should always have strategic content with KPIs very specific about what needs to be measured. Along the way, management workshops and a thorough understanding of accountability must take place.

“BSN essentially rebuilds the house and helps clients move in with improved management processes,” says Sealy. “By the end of our process, upon seeing the first results in QlikView, many companies are shocked to learn how off their information was – but relieved that they now have the knowledge and tools to for the improved view.”

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