

Managing Intelligence

Technology tools for steering the business

The Financial Times proposes to publish the following Digital Business Digest on November 27 2009

Overview: beyond business intelligence. Information is key to business success - it's vital to know exactly how the business is performing. Good decision-making requires close analysis and reporting of data about an organisation, its market and wider trends. Only technology can deliver this level of detail. But what does a business need to know and how can technology help deliver it?

This Digital Business Digest will look at best practice in the gathering and use of data on business performance, in companies of various sizes and in various functions. It will examine, in print, online and in audio and video formats, the following areas:

- The lead feature will begin with an overview of how a business's data and information can be turned into "intelligence" that can underpin decision-making. It will look at how businesses can assist its decision-makers by maximising their use of the data they possess and that is available; how it can be streamlined and stored; and how the "silo mentality" can be overcome, enabling an integration of information from an array of departments and IT applications. It will ask where the role of the machine fits in the organisation - how far does automation go in the decision-making process, and at what point does human intervention take over? **Alan Cane 1,300**
- Resources: What are the fundamental IT requirements for companies of various sizes in their pursuit of managing intelligence? Including hardware, data warehouses, storage, retrieval, search, etc. Are these costly, complicated, in need of a lot of attention? Are they best integrated and handled by aggregators, outsourced, in-house? **Stephen Pritchard 1,000 words**
- Monitoring: how the data can be mined and interrogated. Eg - systems such as event stream processing can trigger real-time alerts that spark human intervention. And data can be analysed through use of analytics, seeking patterns and making predictions. **Stephen Pritchard 1,200 words**
- Making the data useful and meaningful: how tools, such as dashboards, increase the visibility and usability of a company's internal data. How technological tools turn the mass of information that is created into something meaningful and usable - whether in the form of summaries, visual presentations, etc etc. And where this technology is heading. Also look at the staff implications: at what point can too much data become noise? The need to prioritise to avoid overloading managers with information. How technology achieves this - or at least helps with it. **Ross Tieman 1,300 words**

- Supply chain data. How data on logistics, distributions, cash-flow, inventory etc - all the accumulated "intelligence" of the business - can be harnessed and used to improve the management of the supply chain process. Who in a business is creating/originating supply chain data - what happens to it and how can it be used to best effect. Are there particular data/intelligence issues that apply to managing a supply chain? **Jessica Twentyman 900 words**
- Accounting intelligence in financial management. How does accounting intelligence differ from other forms of business intelligence? What are the implications of this - speed? Accuracy? creation of new products? Does it make accounting one of the hardest sources of data to integrate? We look at the pitfalls and the benefits of getting it right. **Ross Tieman 1,000 words**
- Compliance and regulation and how they affect the information a company can hold and use. Are the rules restricting businesses in maximising their corporate "intelligence and therefore hampering decision-making? What are the risk and transparency issues that apply to data held by a company for its decision-making purposes? And how can a business ensure data accuracy, consistency and integrity? **Geoff Nairn 1,300 words**
- Case studies: we will visit companies of different sizes to see management and analytics tools in action.

Digital Business Digest Online

On FT.com we will add further comment and reaction from the FT readership to the issues raised. Podcast and video interviews will bring to life individual experiences of the subject matter.

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Background information for articles or themes that have not yet been assigned to individual writers should be sent, by e-mail only please, to digitalbusiness@ft.com where they will be considered by Peter Whitehead, FT Digital Business editor. Please do not use individual e-mail addresses, fax numbers or post.

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