

: *What questions are important for evaluating a BI proposal?*

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Introducing a major project to provide enterprise-wide business intelligence is much more than just another technology project. Often the culture and decision making processes must be changed to reward and reinforce fact-based decision making. Gartner, IBM Cognos and many others have discussed questions to ask to help insure "flawless business intelligence" or "avoid fatal flaws". Asking the right questions is important and perhaps a checklist will help improve system implementation and your discussions with vendors. Prepare your questions in advance and consider asking the following 7 key questions.

Question #1: What is the purpose of the proposed system? Reporting, ad hoc query and analysis, performance monitoring?

The more limited the purpose the less impact the proposal will have on the enterprise and the decision culture.

Question #2: Who wants the system? Will they really use it?

Knowing who is promoting the project helps assess motivations and the possible acceptance of the system.

Question #3: Is there a data quality problem? How serious is the problem?

A data-driven DSS can not provide useful business intelligence if there is a serious, significant, major data quality problem. Assessing what data is available and its quality early on avoids serious problems during development.

Question #4: What vendors are "best in class"? Are you wedded to your current vendor of a database for transaction systems?

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It is important to determine if there is a bias toward a specific vendor or development approach.

Question #5: Do you have a realistic schedule for the implementation process?

Schedule feasibility is important to consider prior to committing to the project. An unrealistic implementation schedule is a major source of cost overruns and frustrations.

Question #6: Do you have in-house staff to work on the project? If not, are you comfortable outsourcing to contractors or vendor staff a key decision support capability?

Question #7: Did the person suggesting the project just meet with a vendor or attend a tradeshow? Are they excited about dashboards? or Analytics?

Please ask these questions and review the answers carefully as part of a feasibility study. If the resulting decision is to proceed with a project, invite vendors to respond to a structured request for proposals.

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Last update: 2011-01-30 08:52