: What is mobile business intelligence?

by Dan Power

Editor, DSSResources.com

Mobile business intelligence refers to data-driven decision support applications on mobile devices like smartphones and tablet computers. Mobile BI uses wireless devices to support data transfer and operations decision making. Mobile BI applications exist for Android, Blackberry, iPhone/iPad, and Windows Mobile operating systems. In general, the phrase refers to a rapidly emerging decision support application area. More applications are becoming available from start-ups and traditional BI vendors for innovative dashboards, live reports, CRM and performance monitoring.

Mobile delivery of BI is about providing tactical information needed to make immediate decisions. "People are looking for information to address a particular question or to complete a transaction," says Gartner analyst Ted Friedman. "The biggest value is in operational BI — information in the context of applications — not in pushing lots of data to somebody's phone. What you want to send them is the exceptions, the alerts or what they really need to act on now. (see Vaughn, 2008)."

Samir Sakpal, an analyst at Frost & Sullivan, predicts that mobile analytics will move beyond niche markets, like the financial sector, into mainstream use because, he says, it helps businesses do two things: "Make faster decisions and drive a higher quality of customer service."

Tablets are an important delivery platform for mobile BI. A new age tablet has many advantages including excellent battery life, touch recognition and hi resolution display. The applications are lagging (lacking), but we are seeing many cloud based, mobile BI applications. Dresner Advisory Services (2012) examined 25 BI product offering. The Dresner study rated MicroStrategy the top Mobile BI offering, with the highest platform score and the highest customer user rating.

Tablets represent a new computing form factor. In computing, a form factor specifies the physical dimensions of computing platforms and major system components. Common form factors for computing platforms include: handheld, tablet, desktop and enterprise computers. Innovations in the computing form factor have previously resulted in increased penetration of decision support in organizations.

There are many YouTube videos related to mobile BI. For example, there are demonstrations of PushBI Mobile Business Intelligence solution shown on the Apple iPad device, Oco's mobile SaaS BI solutions, and arcplan Mobile. Umesh Jain argues in Digital Software Magazine "The mobile BI landscape is still in the early stages of development, with MicroStrategy, QlikView, and Roambi

taking the early lead in offering and focus." The tablet form factor creates excitement and new application possibilities for decision support and business intelligence.

Update November 27, 2011 According to a blog post by Lachlan James, Gartner Vice President, David Willis, listed BI as the second most crucial commercial business application for tablet devices. Forrester blogger, Boris Evelson also predicts Mobile BI will go mainstream. He states "it's all about getting things done" and mobile BI will move "into the hands of end users". Evelson also noted the importance of Collaborative BI, suggesting that "BI tools integrated with email and collaboration platforms" will enjoy marketplace dominance.

Updated November 20, 2012 "We're in the midst of a profound shift toward Mobile BI and mobile computing," said Howard Dresner, Chief Research Officer, Dresner Advisory Services, and author of the 2012 Wisdom of Crowds® Mobile Business Intelligence Market Study. "Mobile BI has become mainstreamed. In fact, for some, it's the only way they consume Business Intelligence content! In 2012, its impact is now both clear and profound." (http://dssresources.com/news/3644.php)

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Please cite as:

Power, D., "What is mobile business intelligence?" DSS News, Vol. 12, No. 14, 07/10/2011 at URL http://dssresources.com/faq/index.php?action=artikel&id=229 .

Author: Daniel Power
Last update: 2012-11-20 08:57