ECLEVA
INNOVATIVE IDEAS
DELIVERED SIMPLY

Small companies increase agility and enhance decision-making with low-cost Business Intelligence

Overview

It's getting easier to access real-time data, but the big question is: how can small businesses make the most of it? Today, tools like Microsoft Power BI are transforming analytics, reporting and decision-making. By capturing data from multiple platforms and merging it into one application, employees with basic Excel skills can dissect data. But they can also monitor progress in real time against business goals and key performance indicators. With pro-active decision-making, small businesses are transforming their agility, responding faster to customer trends and seizing competitive advantage.

The Need

Small business — big data

The lure of Business Intelligence (BI) is growing fast. Today, it's becoming easier to integrate databases and then build a basic BI capability. Meanwhile, the sheer volume of data captured even by small businesses makes these databases a gold-mine of information. The result: more companies are moving from advanced analytics tools to BI capabilities that transform real-time decision making.

In response, systems suppliers like Microsoft are transforming usability. Intuitive data-visualisation tools mean most Excel-familiar workers can interrogate data and build stunning charts. Creating bespoke reports and dashboards is no longer a niche skill. As employees take the initiative with live data in their everyday jobs, demand for BI is growing fast.

At ECLEVA, we see an increasing number of small businesses who want to use BI to improve productivity. Chief Executive, Patrick Northcott, explains: "Today, creating a BI proof-of-concept is generally very easy so customers can instantly grasp the potential. Microsoft creates BI content packs for small-business accounting packages like Xero, and this means initiating BI takes very little time — especially in a business-to-business scenario."

ECLEVA recently helped three small businesses implement BI to overcome major challenges. One client, an asset-finance company called 3E, wanted to enable all its stakeholders – equipment suppliers, lenders and service providers – to analyse contract performance in real time. Baptists World Aid Australia (BWAA), wanted to improve reporting for child-sponsorship programs in developing countries. And construction company, Richard Crookes Constructions, wanted real-time insights into construction-site spending and activity.

"Each of these clients faced challenges where we know BI can provide a highly cost-effective solution," says Patrick. "These challenges include: where manual reporting is highly time-consuming; where companies struggle with strategic decision making; and where organisations want to engage more dynamically with customers and stakeholders."

The Solution

Today, ECLEVA's BI clients range from large institutions, such as NSW Treasury Corporation, to small companies and partnerships. According to Patrick, the first step is always the one that defines the value add.

"The key point about BI is that if data is not actionable there is no point analysing it," he says. "Consequently, the first thing we do is to identify the lead indicators that will transform decision making. BI empowers people to answer the business questions that are important to them."

ECLEVA's development methodology helps companies adopt BI capabilities fast. Projects are typically executed in Agile 'sprints.' This involves creating a defined, standalone capability within a short, rapid burst of development — an ability recently demonstrated on all three client sites.

Result

Swift & dynamic decision-making

Richard Crookes Constructions successfully developed a series of real-time KPI construction-site reports on operational health and safety, cashflow and site activities using Microsoft Power BI. According to Patrick, these are both excellent examples that demonstrate the power of the BI experience.

"Power BI comes with free, pre-designed visuals for charts and reports, so that basic Excel skills are sufficient to produce high-quality dashboards," he says. "Business Intelligence is democratising

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Following on from the success at Richard Crookes Constructions, ECLEVA helped CIMIC Group (formerly Leighton Holdings) use Microsoft Power BI to consolidate financial data from its subsidiary organisations and rapidly assemble a set of impressive board reports. These enabled executives to review critical business information with ease.

Greater professionalism

ECLEVA's project with BWAA shows how a small BI project can save vast amounts of time. By eliminating a business process – in this case compiling reports for donors – BWAA liberates workers from of a hugely time-consuming activity. At the same time, transparency to donors enhances the credibility of sponsorship programs.

"Instead of digesting a report sent as an attachment, donors investigate data for themselves," says Patrick. "The Power BI portal is interactive, so donors see far more than was ever presented in a report. This helps BWAA project itself as a highly professional organisation."

Enhanced service levels

Meanwhile, data accessibility has transformed productivity at 3E. With all data in one system and accessible to all, executives say their workforce is now more efficient. As a group, employees can deliver more in less time while client service levels are above what were previously possible.

Patrick observes that 3E's experience is becoming typical. "Today, companies are willing to pay more to improve the quality of their decision making," he says. "That's why, in the future, we'll see more IT projects that are specifically focussed just on BI."

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Learn more about how ECLEVA helps companies save costs and operate more efficiently. Contact us at info@ecleva.com or call us on 02 9467 9300.