SAP BusinessObjects Dashboards: Poor Man's Dashboard

Posted by Vineet Gupta Mar 17, 2012

Introduction

Is it possible to build dashboard which performs with amazing speed running on a low budget SAP BW system? Not a small BW system but one with a 2T database size, containing data for a $5B organization. You say ofcourse SAP has tools to speed up any BW query with BWA or HANA. But should you wait till you can procure those tools? We have one working in a public sector organization using the bare bones system.

How do you do "IT"

1. We built the dashboard starting page using Xcelsius to give it the "flashy" look a dashboard should have. The front page gets the data from BW query using SAP Netweaver BI connection in Xcelsius. It loads really fasy because the query is written on a data-provider with less than 50 rows of data, one for each metric in the dashboard. The data provider is loaded using APD after the nightly loads. Using Xcelsius with Netweaver BI data connection eliminates the need for Business Objects Enterprise server.
2. The front page contains a gauge for each metric. The gauge is linked to the detail page for each metric.The detail page for each metric was built using Web Application designer. Using Web Templates with common look and feel for each metric lets you develop your dashboard in a modular and disttributed fashion. Yes you can call Web Templates from an Xcelsius dashboard and vice versa. By publishing the Xcelsius dashboard and metric web templates in SAP Netweaver portal the user will see the dashboard as a single seamless application.
3. How do we ensure that all the pages in the dashboard perform well? For metrics based on slow running queries, yes slow running even after doing all the performance tuning magic, queries that make you wish you could afford BWA, you can use APD to build data providers with dashboard level summarized data only. APDs do a good job and can be scheduled in the nightly load process chain to refresh the dashboard data.
4. Using web templates instead of Xcelsius dashboard for metric pages allow the use of flexible drag drop drill down capabilities, making the dashboard useful for a multiple levels of user experience: from Executives and casual users to business analysts.
5. The dashboard can be easily upgraded / simplified when BWA or HANA becomes available by replacing APD with fast performing queries on the base InfoCubes.

Summary:

Building well performing, flashy, functional dashboards with large number of KPI metrics on large amounts of SAP BW data is possible using the basic BW and Business Objects tools even without the cost of BWA, HANA and Business Objects Enterprise server. The dashboards can provide the engaging visual experience

of a flash application, summary view with quick drop down filters for occasional users, and detailed drill-down and filtering options for the consummate analysts. All this for not just a small limited number of users but available concurrently to thousands of enterprise users located in different geographies. SAP BW/BOBJ makes it possible.
1313 Views Tags: enterprise_portal_(ep), business_intelligence_(businessobjects), analytics, enterprise_data_warehousing/business_warehouse, enterprise_performance_management

Vineet Gupta *in response to James Macwan on page 2*
Apr 15, 2012 12:50 AM
James,
There is very detailed help available on help.sap.com as well as on SDN on how to use Web templates. If there is enough interest, I may blog step-by-step with a real world example. Here is brief summary version:

1. Requirement: Display employee safety index metric on the dashboard. Defined as number of employee accidents per 100,000 thousand hours worked. User should be able to detail the metric by Cost Center, Month and Job Category. Default display should for current calendar year to date.
2. Create a query(Q1) on the BW cube that implements the requirement. Assume the query takes about 2 minutes to run. A dashboard on this query would not be very succesful if the users have to wait 2 minutes.
3. Create an ODS (say O01) with just the employee safety index KF and Cost Center, Month and Job category as characteristics..
4. Create an APD with Q1 as input, and target as O01. Schedule it for a nightly update in the process chain.
5. Create query Q2 on O01 to be used as datasource for dashboard.
6. Create an Xcelsius dashboard with a Netweaver BI connection to query Q2. Lets say all you do is put a single gauge that shows overall employee safety index for current calendar year to day. Add a URL link to the gauge to a BW web template, say W001. Publish the Xcelsius dashboard on Netweaver portal.
7. Build the web template W001 with query Q2 as datasurce. Just as an example, Put the table item, Navigation item andf one drop-down for each of the three characterisitcs. Add Titles and branding if needed. Publish the template on portal as well.

You can easily find help links for each of the step.

James Macwan *in response to Sudhanshu Surma on page 2*
Apr 12, 2012 10:52 AM
Friend, would you help me understand how can it be done???

James Macwan
Apr 12, 2012 10:52 AM
Vineet, Your post definitely paints a fine picture for BO developers and it shows how their life can be simple and easy. However I would appreciate if you give an example on how it is done i.e. on how can you use web templates in detail and if possible give the steps in detail. In short can you show us how it needs to be done in practical world. I am sure you do have an answer for this.

Sudhanshu Surma
Mar 29, 2012 1:45 PM
Insightful stuff! While others keep wondering HAan-ya-NA (if you don't get it, do reach out to your Indian friends), here is our hardworking BW Man making best use of what we already have:-)....keep it up Vineet, keep sharing!