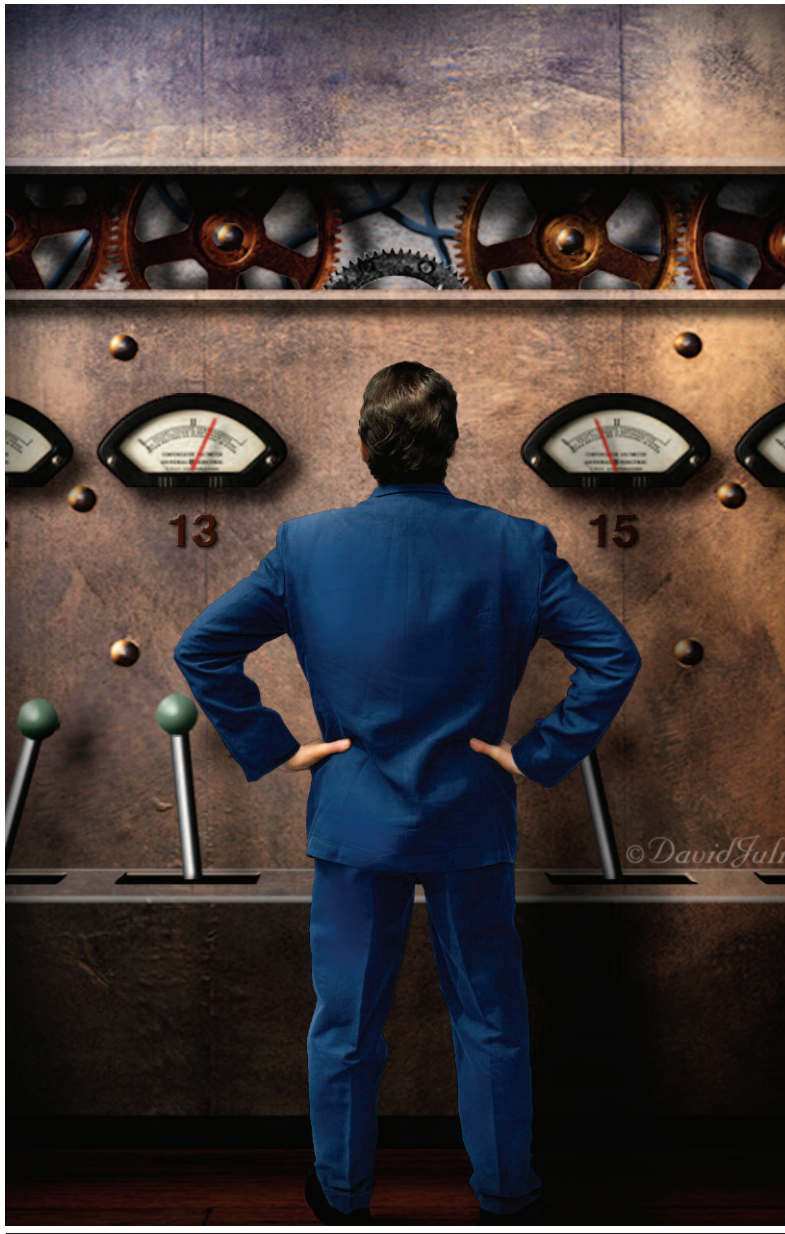


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Product Review

Cognos'
BI Solutions
Create
Smarter
Decision-
Making at the
University of
Minnesota

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Cognos' BI Solutions Create Smarter Decision-Making at the University of Minnesota

REVIEWER: Susan Grotevant, director of information management systems for the University of Minnesota (U of MN).

BACKGROUND: The U of MN has a long history as a top academic research institution. Since its inception in 1851, Minneapolis-based U of MN has grown to encompass four campuses, a collaborative center in Rochester, extension offices and research and outreach centers throughout the state.

PLATFORMS: The Web-based reporting strategy uses a Microsoft .NET environment running IIS Version 5. OLAP capability is provided by Cognos BI for the Web Version 7.0. SQL Server 2000.

PROBLEM SOLVED: The U of MN implemented a budgetary and management model in 1997 designed to provide financial incentives to enhance revenues and control costs. The objective of this model was to reduce resource and programmatic redundancies, achieve cost savings and streamline administrative operations. In order to make sense of the full breadth of our data stores and realize an ROI from our existing enterprise resource planning (ERP) investments while lowering TCO, we decided to invest in a BI solution from Cognos.

PRODUCT FUNCTIONALITY: While always powerful, steady improvements in its ease of use have significantly expanded the number of users able to tap into the sophisticated graphical and analytic capabilities provided by Cognos BI. Improvements in usability made it possible for academic administrators to see large differences in revenue contributions made by different programs based on academic disciplines, levels of instruction and the cost of faculty and

instructors. Using this information, the colleges now have a wider range of alternatives for increasing tuition revenue other than just admitting more students.

STRENGTHS: Cognos BI is a cost-effective analytic solution used to transform data into BI - providing information in both graphical and tabular formats. It was this ability that helped facilitate the identification of \$5 million in unbilled tuition during the initial implementation of the new student financial system in 2000 and is a continuing asset in ensuring that the data supporting operational and management decisions is as accurate as possible. The longer-term ROI on BI and academic analytics can be gauged by the increase in tuition rates and revenues since 2000 that total more than \$187 million annually and the escalating demand for more and better operational and management information.

WEAKNESSES: We would like to see enhancements in usability and formatting in a professional report-authoring environment, which appears to be resolved in the next version of the product.

SELECTION CRITERIA: The U of MN first selected Cognos to help provide the ROI in its new ERP systems by lowering the TCO and helping translate vast amounts of data into usable and strategic operational and management information. U of MN required a thin client BI tool with sufficient robustness and scalability to manage millions of rows of data and complex calculations from multiple systems, guarantee compatibility with its ERP system data, supply OLAP functionality with an attractive and intuitive user interface, provide report-authoring capability that could be easily implemented

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Cognos BI

Cognos, Inc.
3755 Riverside Drive
Ottawa, Ontario Canada K1G 4K9
(613) 738-1440
www.cognos.com

by programmers as well as business and data analysts, and be integrated with the university's security infrastructure and other reporting and analysis tools.

DELIVERABLES: The breadth of analysis continues to expand as the power of Cognos OLAP functionality becomes more easily accessible to a wider range of users. BI cubes are currently used to: 1) support the development of better models for understanding the supply and demand for courses; 2) analyze the complex cross-subsidies that can exist within a college based on the differences in instructional costs, discipline-related salary differentials, and the mix of undergraduate, graduate and professional students; and 3) understand and manage the factors influencing instructional costs, among other things.

VENDOR SUPPORT: Cognos has been an ideal vendor by maintaining and fostering long-term relationships and partnerships with us, soliciting and acting on feedback for improvements, being responsive to customer business needs, and continuing to deliver high value and innovative enhancements to its product line.

DOCUMENTATION: Sources of information include vendor-supplied training, online support and troubleshooting services, and local and regional customer support groups. Supplemental resources have been provided when needed.