

SAP Solution Brief
SAP NetWeaver



BUSINESS INFORMATION MANAGEMENT WITH SAP NetWeaver™

Turning Information into Intelligence

IT departments are under constant pressure to give business leaders and knowledge workers accurate, timely, digestible information and a “single version of the truth” on which to base strategic, tactical, and (increasingly) operational decisions. But locating, integrating, and packaging this information has traditionally proven difficult and expensive. By performing business information management using the SAP NetWeaver™ platform, enterprises gain the ability to turn raw data into actionable intelligence that can help reduce costs, promote innovation, and increase revenue.

All organizations rely on pertinent information to make informed decisions. But finding, integrating, and interpreting data has traditionally been a Herculean task. The problem? Too many sources, too few connections between them, and a multitude of dissimilar user interfaces. Valuable structured information typically resides in a host of databases, applications, and other repositories, but it often takes time and effort to streamline or customize the querying, reporting, and analysis that turns disparate data into useful knowledge. Unstructured information – which may reside in e-mail folders, computer files, and Web sites – has become an increasingly important source of information for virtually all enterprises, but dealing with this vastly dispersed data has also been a major challenge. The result: redundant, expensive querying, analysis, reporting, and data-warehousing processes that require an uncomfortably high commitment of time, money, and human capital.

There are, to be sure, a number of point solutions and applications that deliver useful elements of a business information management strategy: a data mart for campaign management; a business intelligence tool for cost controlling; a performance management utility for business leaders. Deployment of applications like these can help achieve limited tactical goals, but many organizations find themselves with a menagerie of incompatible software that lacks common standards and consumes IT resources. Upgrades, too, present a major challenge; if one component is tweaked or improved, costly adjustments must be made to all the linked applications.

Most vexing of all, heterogeneous, silo-based systems tend to miss a corporate information strategy based on the “single version of the truth” – a comprehensive conclusion (about market trends, customer habits, staffing levels, procurement practices, or production planning) based on all pertinent inputs, and the ability to link operational realities with strategic goals. As a result, the use and quality of information within an organization is typically driven by departmental goals and the random skills of individual contributors, rather than by a comprehensive business information management strategy.

Improving Business Information Management with SAP NetWeaver™

The SAP NetWeaver™ platform helps IT departments build a foundation for delivering a single version of the truth to all stakeholders both within and beyond an enterprise. By leveraging preintegrated, interoperable components like SAP® Business Intelligence, SAP Exchange Infrastructure, SAP Master Data Management, and the knowledge management functionality of the SAP Enterprise Portal, companies can organize and integrate both structured and unstructured data, helping people at all levels make better decisions based on better information.

With access to actionable information (tailored to individual job roles and shared via executive dashboards, planning applications, or reports), your enterprise gains the ability to fine-tune business initiatives and alter processes in response to constantly changing market dynamics. The result: informed decision making that is tightly synchronized with corporate strategy and based on discernible trends and patterns rather than hunches or after-the-fact insights.

Making the Right Connections

As an open integration platform, SAP NetWeaver supports all relevant standards including Java Database Connectivity (JDBC), object linking and embedding database (OLE DB) for online analytical processing (OLAP), or XML. It connects seamlessly with third-party and legacy solutions including front-end tools, extraction, transformation, and loading tools, point-of-sale applications,

data aging technologies, and scheduling and monitoring applications. Leveraging the SAP NetWeaver built-in component, SAP Auto-ID Infrastructure, your organization gains the ability to receive and analyze feeds of real-time radio frequency identification (RFID) data from a variety of readers and other devices.

SAP’s open, nonproprietary approach gives you a rich choice of options when deploying business information management solutions – allowing IT departments to choose interoperable components that best meet corporate needs. Regardless of whether you choose an integrated, all-SAP solution, an aggregation of point solutions, or a mixture of both, the open integration capabilities of SAP NetWeaver help deliver a low total cost of ownership, the flexibility to leverage existing resources, and the power to adapt and extend processes to capitalize on market opportunities or respond to change.

Putting the Flex in Flexibility

Some organizations are highly centralized, while others embrace widely dispersed decision making. While both approaches are supported by integrated information, the autonomy granted to individual subsidiaries, lines of business, or even internal departments, varies greatly. With SAP NetWeaver, companies gain an array of distinctive tools developed to support specific jobs, roles, and skill sets. Key controls may remain with the IT department while business leaders benefit from the flexibility to adapt templates and guidelines to meet local needs. This capability increases the adoption and effectiveness of business intelligence while allowing the IT department to focus on core tasks, where IT typically adds the most value.

As an application platform, SAP NetWeaver not only delivers leading technology, but also makes it relevant to business needs. SAP Business Intelligence comes with a wide choice of industry-specific models and templates, allowing for rapid, cost-effective deployment while providing best-in-class methodologies, configurations, and guidance. Additionally, business intelligence and knowledge management can be embedded directly into applications and business processes by leveraging Web services

and analysis tools. This integration shortens the learning curve dramatically while improving the decision-making process for everyone in the enterprise. And, thanks to inherent capabilities for enterprise application integration and business process management, SAP NetWeaver delivers a business information management solution that injects insight and intelligence wherever it's needed within a business process or set of processes.

Putting the Pieces in Place

As competitive pressures continue to build, today's organizations demand a future-proof infrastructure for business information management – a platform that delivers immediate value without sacrificing the potential for growth and change. SAP NetWeaver allows organizations to work toward the future at a self-determined pace, and many companies opt for an incremental, step-by-step approach. For example, an enterprise may deploy SAP Business Intelligence to meet the specific needs of a particular business unit. Then, thanks to the scalability inherent in all SAP NetWeaver-powered applications, the functionality can be gradually expanded to the whole enterprise, serving larger constituencies and a wider range of user roles. As a next logical step, business planning capabilities may be added so that leaders can predict and respond to changing market trends. Finally, as organizations move closer to the Enterprise Services Architecture blueprint, Web services may be deployed to deliver intelligence directly into processes and applications.

Core Activities of Business Information Management

The business information management capabilities of SAP NetWeaver support a number of core business processes and activities, each of which can be adapted to meet specific industry or organizational needs. These activities – enterprise reporting; query and analysis; business planning and analytical services; and enterprise data warehousing – can help meet today's requirements while moving an organization along the path to Enterprise Services Architecture.

Enterprise Reporting, Query and Analysis

To provide value, business information must be sought, found, analyzed, and shared. Associated activities include ad hoc query, interactive analysis, and reporting – all supported and enhanced by user-friendly dashboards and scorecards. These activities are fully enabled by SAP NetWeaver via an integrated portfolio of tools designed to meet the needs of everyone from casual business users to IT specialists. To help get information out of databases and into operations, run-time outputs can be smoothly meshed into an enterprise's operational activities and linked to business applications such as customer relationship management, supply chain management, or enterprise resource planning. As a result, people can analyze patterns, trends, and events and then put these insights to work with information from all functional areas and locations, ranging from internal systems to external supplier and customer networks.

Business Planning and Analytical Services

Corporate planning is rapidly evolving from static, cyclical budgeting into active, strategy-driven guidance, with tight feedback loops between planning and execution. This requires state-of-the-art planning tools that allow leaders to predict and react to changing market conditions. SAP NetWeaver provides all the features and functions needed to support planning applications in a Microsoft Excel-based or portal-based collaborative environment. And each approach can be tailored to the needs of either strategic or operational planning. SAP NetWeaver also provides the sophisticated analytical tools (like those used in cluster analysis or data mining) that are becoming such an important element of business information management.

Enterprise Data Warehousing

With its seamless alignment of both master- and metadata, SAP NetWeaver enhances data warehousing with responsive life-cycle management tools and a scalable platform that allows for a flexible warehousing environment. The SAP approach supports three conceptual layers of data warehousing: a complete data warehouse; a subset of multidimensional models; or single data marts. Information may be both structured and unstructured,

and it may reside in various repositories throughout the enterprise and beyond. To optimize responsiveness, organizations increasingly are moving from daily to hourly updates of data warehouses – or even real-time access. SAP NetWeaver supports this trend by leveraging Web services to speed data into the business information environment.

Benefits for Today and Tomorrow

SAP NetWeaver solves the challenge of disparate, balkanized business information management initiatives and island solutions. By establishing a solid, robust, and scalable platform, IT departments can maintain an appropriate layer of control, while allowing all stakeholders to seek and find the information they need to boost productivity and achieve strategic goals. The trend today is toward information self-service, or “information democracy,” and SAP NetWeaver enables this approach with an array of embedded analysis tools, dashboards, and planning capabilities. By using SAP NetWeaver to enhance business information management, your organization can accomplish the following:

- **Improve decision making at all levels.** All stakeholders are provided with key information in a targeted, actionable format that is personalized according to role and function but still based on a “single version of the truth.”
- **Increase efficiency.** Redundant, labor-intensive data collection, consolidation, and reporting tasks are virtually eliminated, as employees have access to a single, unified business information framework.
- **Cut costs and boost revenues.** Better business intelligence drives better business decisions – resulting in lower costs, streamlined processes, and new revenue opportunities.
- **Reduce IT expenses.** With one integrated but open platform, you can significantly reduce the integration, maintenance, and support efforts typically associated with best-of-breed approaches while retaining utmost control and flexibility.

The Backbone for Your Information Strategy

With SAP NetWeaver, IT organizations can increase the usability and scope of structured and unstructured data. As people at all levels and locations transform raw data into meaningful intelligence, processes can be enhanced, intervals shortened, costs reduced, and information becomes a competitive advantage.

Find Out More

Contact SAP to learn more about crafting a specific business information management practice with SAP NetWeaver. Additional information is available on our Web site at www.sap.com/netweaver.