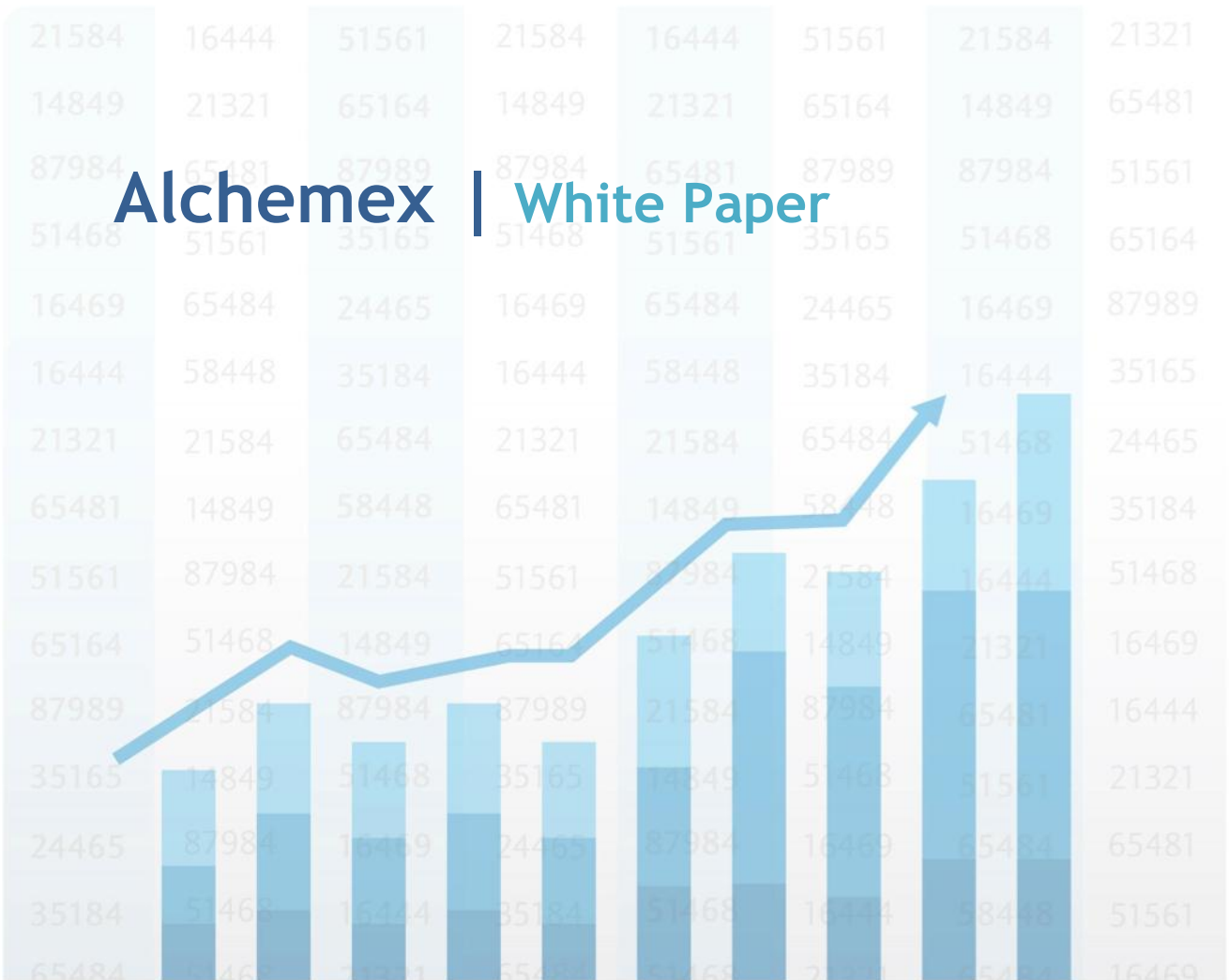


Alchemex | White Paper



Making an investment in Business Intelligence



Executive Summary



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Audience: This paper is intended for small to mid-market business leaders who need to get a better understanding of Business Intelligence.

Business Intelligence (BI) is a collective term that applies to the rapid transformation of business data into relevant information to enable quality decision making. The essence of good BI is delivering the right information, at the right time, in the right format. Part of the challenge in investing in BI is understanding where returns can be made, and ensuring that implementation addresses these directly and quickly.



Making an investment in Business Intelligence

Business Intelligence (BI) is a collective term that applies to the rapid transformation of business data into relevant information to enable quality decision making. Information is one of the most important resources a company has, so when a company can make decisions based on timely and accurate information, presented in a meaningful format, the performance of that company improves.

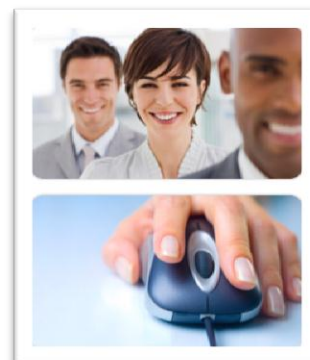
Business Intelligence is being talked about everywhere, with all major vendors attempting to stake their claim in some form or another. Probably the most prolific in their communication is Microsoft who is very serious about delivering tools to cater not only for tier one customers, but for the masses too. Traditionally such technology has only been available to corporate giants with huge budgets, but this will be changing rapidly in the years to come.

It is no secret that Microsoft has invested significant resource in developing areas of Excel that take it beyond just a spreadsheet application. This is evident in all the rich functionality built into Office 2007 supporting what businesses need to be competitive and more profitable. Excel as a tool is already so pervasively deployed, but now businesses need to get clever about how they leverage this existing investment in conjunction with BI tools that close the loop on “loose” Excel spreadsheet use, ultimately delivering one single version of the truth.

The essence of good BI is delivering the right information, at the right time, in the right format. Consider how few businesses can actually deploy relevant information to the right people, timeously, consistently, in a suitable format, and cost effectively. This, in a nutshell, is the challenge facing both business owners and BI vendors.

So what is the best attitude to approach an investment in Business Intelligence? All decision makers want to be comfortable when making an investment, knowing that it will be worth it and that it will result in a return for the business. Part of the challenge is understanding where these returns can be made, and ensuring that the implementation addresses these directly and quickly.

The first area where returns are easily realised and measured is in the preparation and generation of information. A good strategy here will eliminate repetitive tasks and risks relating to regular human intervention. This has a direct effect of freeing up resources to be more productive in other areas of the business. If Microsoft Excel is the delivery tool of choice which is often the case, then a company’s investment in these skills is definitely worthwhile. The benefits and efficiencies are realised across other areas of the business and not only within the BI initiative.



The ultimate value derived from a BI initiative is when a company uses this information to implement changes that result in competitive advantage and increased profits. It's one thing delivering the right information to relevant people, but this is worthless unless it is used to drive changes. Returns in this area are less tangible and sadly, companies often don't actually get to this stage where the real value is. Vendors and Partners alike delivering BI solutions should be striving to help their customers get this value.

As a parting thought, consider the following...

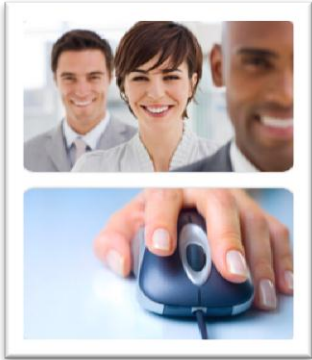
- a) One good buying decision could save a business 10 times the original investment in the first month, because the right information was generated at the right time to make that buying decision.
- b) Marginal improvements on management of working capital equate to better cash-flow - again justifying the investment tenfold.
- c) How does a business get the information it needs presently, and how will this be replaced/changed by implementing an effective BI solution? The savings are easily quantifiable - giving a measurable return on investment here alone.

So the question is: can your business afford not to take this seriously? Implementing BI need not be complex and expensive, yet the returns can be significant.

Alchemex - Business Intelligence. Simply. Visit www.alchemex.com for more information.

“Alchemex is a must for any organization serious about information - its simple, its Microsoft Excel. Possibly one of the shrewdest IT investments to date.”

**Wayne Lambson,
Financial Director,
Foreshore Ships
Agency**



About the Author

With more than 20 years of experience as a Business Analyst my ultimate goal is to create and deploy appropriate technology to help small and medium size businesses owners see the wood from the trees and to help them make better decisions and be more profitable, ultimately creating a better life for themselves and all the people in their employ.

About Alchemex

ALCHEMEX is a leading developer, enabler and support provider of affordable Excel-based Business Intelligence software for small to mid-market enterprises.

For nearly 20000 registered users in Africa, Europe, Australasia and North America, ALCHEMEX's reporting software delivers automated financial, payroll and other decision-support reports in Microsoft Excel 'at the click of a button', directly from a company's accounting or payroll system.

ALCHEMEX integrates with leading accounting and payroll packages, pulling real-time data directly from the database, thereby eliminating manual report preparation and repetitive data extracts. ALCHEMEX provides complete automation of pre-formatted Excel reports for MYOB Exonet, Pastel Evolution (BIC), Pastel Partner (BIC), Pastel Payroll (BIC), Pastel Xpress (BIC), Sage50, Sage ACCPAC ERP (SAI), Sage MAS ERP 90/200 (SMI), Sage MAS ERP 200 (SMI), SAP Business One, Simply Accounting by Sage, Sybiz Vision (BIC), SYSPRO and VIP Payroll (BIM).

ALCHEMEX is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner.

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